

For Six Month Period Ending AUG 31 2006
(Insert date)

I - REGISTRANT

1. (a) Name of Registrant

(b) Registration No. 5609

VENEZUELA INFORMATION OFFICE

(c) Business Address(es) of Registrant

2000 P STREET NW, SUITE 240
WASHINGTON, DC 20036

2. Has there been a change in the information previously furnished in connection with the following:

- (a) If an individual:
- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|--|
| (1) Residence address | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (2) Citizenship | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (3) Occupation | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
- (b) If an organization:
- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| (1) Name | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (2) Ownership or control | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (3) Branch offices | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
- (c) Explain fully all changes, if any, indicated in items (a) and (b) above.

N/A

IF THE REGISTRANT IS AN INDIVIDUAL, OMIT RESPONSE TO ITEMS 3, 4 AND 5(a).

3. If you have previously filed Exhibit C¹, state whether any changes therein have occurred during this 6 month reporting period.

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, have you filed an amendment to the Exhibit C? Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, please attach the required amendment.

N/A

SEP 29 PM 12:03
CRM/ISS/REGISTRATION UNIT

¹ The Exhibit C, for which no printed form is provided, consists of a true copy of the charter, articles of incorporation, association, and by laws of a registrant that is an organization. (A waiver of the requirement to file an Exhibit C may be obtained for good cause upon written application to the Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC 20530.)

4. (a) Have any persons ceased acting as partners, officers, directors or similar officials of the registrant during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Position	Date connection ended
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- (b) Have any persons become partners, officers, directors or similar officials during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Residence address	Citizenship	Position	Date assumed
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5. (a) Has any person named in item 4(b) rendered services directly in furtherance of the interests of any foreign principal? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, identify each such person and describe his service.

- (b) Have any employees or individuals, who have filed a short form registration statement, terminated their employment or connection with the registrant during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Position or connection	Date terminated
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- (c) During this 6 month reporting period, has the registrant hired as employees or in any other capacity, any persons who rendered or will render services to the registrant directly in furtherance of the interests of any foreign principal(s) in other than a clerical or secretarial, or in a related or similar capacity? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Residence address	Citizenship	Position	Date assumed
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6. Have short form registration statements been filed by all of the persons named in Items 5(a) and 5(c) of the supplemental statement? Yes ☐ No ☐

N/A

If no, list names of persons who have not filed the required statement.

II - FOREIGN PRINCIPAL

7. Has your connection with any foreign principal ended during this 6 month reporting period?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name of foreign principal

Date of termination

8. Have you acquired any new foreign principal² during this 6 month reporting period?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name and address of foreign principal

Date acquired

9. In addition to those named in Items 7 and 8, if any, list foreign principals² whom you continued to represent during the 6 month reporting period.

EMBASSY OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA

10. EXHIBITS A AND B

(a) Have you filed for each of the newly acquired foreign principals in Item 8 the following:

N/A

Exhibit A ³	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Exhibit B ⁴	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

If no, please attach the required exhibit.

(b) Have there been any changes in the Exhibits A and B previously filed for any foreign principal whom you represented during the 6 month period?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, have you filed an amendment to these exhibits?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, please attach the required amendment.

² The term "foreign principal" includes, in addition to those defined in Section 1(b) of the Act, an individual organization any of whose activities are directly or indirectly supervised, directed, controlled, financed, or subsidized in whole or in major part by a foreign government, foreign political party, foreign organization or foreign individual. (See Rule 100(a) (9).) A registrant who represents more than one foreign principal is required to list in the statements he files under the Act only those principals for whom he is not entitled to claim exemption under Section 3 of the Act. (See Rule 208.)

³ The Exhibit A, which is filed on Form CRM-157 (Formerly OBD-67), sets forth the information required to be disclosed concerning each foreign principal.

⁴ The Exhibit B, which is filed on Form CRM-155 (Formerly OBD-65), sets forth the information concerning the agreement or understanding between the registrant and the foreign principal.

III - ACTIVITIES

11. During this 6 month reporting period, have you engaged in any activities for or rendered any services to any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, identify each such foreign principal and describe in full detail your activities and services:

-EMBASSY OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA
ALL ACTIVITIES WERE OF A POLITICAL NATURE AND ARE
DESCRIBED IN RESPONSE TO ITEM 12 OF SECTION III.

- SEE ATTACHMENT -

12. During this 6 month reporting period, have you on behalf of any foreign principal engaged in political activity⁵ as defined below? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, identify each such foreign principal and describe in full detail all such political activity, indicating, among other things, the relations, interests and policies sought to be influenced and the means employed to achieve this purpose. If the registrant arranged, sponsored or delivered speeches, lectures or radio and TV broadcasts, give details as to dates and places of delivery, names of speakers and subject matter.

- SEE LOG ATTACHMENT -

13. In addition to the above described activities, if any, have you engaged in activity on your own behalf which benefits any or all of your foreign principals? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, describe fully.

⁵ The term "political activities" means any activity that the person engaging in believes will, or that the person intends to, in any way influence any agency or official of the Government of the United States or any section of the public within the United States with reference to formulating, adopting or changing the domestic or foreign policies of the United States or with reference to the political or public interests, policies, or relations of a government of a foreign country or a foreign political party.

IV - FINANCIAL INFORMATION

14. (a) RECEIPTS-MONIES

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received from any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement, or from any other source, for or in the interests of any such foreign principal, any contributions, income or money either as compensation or otherwise? Yes ☒ No ☐

If no, explain why.

If yes, set forth below in the required detail and separately for each foreign principal an account of such monies⁶

Date	From whom	Purpose	Amount
03-13-2006	VENEZUELAN EMBASSY	OPERATING EXPENSES	295,000.00
07-20-2006	VENEZUELAN EMBASSY	OPERATING EXPENSES	190,000.00
			<u>\$485,000</u>
			Total

(b) RECEIPTS - FUND RAISING CAMPAIGN

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received, as part of a fund raising campaign⁷, any money on behalf of any foreign principal named in items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, have you filed an Exhibit D⁸ to your registration? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, indicate the date the Exhibit D was filed. Date _____

(c) RECEIPTS - THINGS OF VALUE

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received any thing of value⁹ other than money from any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement, or from any other source, for or in the interests of any such foreign principal? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name of foreign principal	Date received	Description of thing of value	Purpose
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^{6, 7} A registrant is required to file an Exhibit D if he collects or receives contributions, loans, money, or other things of value for a foreign principal, as part of a fund raising campaign. (See Rule 201(e).)

⁸ An Exhibit D, for which no printed form is provided, sets forth an account of money collected or received as a result of a fund raising campaign and transmitted for a foreign principal.

⁹ Things of value include but are not limited to gifts, interest free loans, expense free travel, favored stock purchases, exclusive rights, favored treatment over competitors, "kickbacks," and the like.

15. (a) DISBURSEMENTS - MONIES

During this 6 month reporting period, have you

(1) disbursed or expended monies in connection with activity on behalf of any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement? Yes ☒ No ☐

(2) transmitted monies to any such foreign principal? Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, explain in full detail why there were no disbursements made on behalf of any foreign principal.

If yes, set forth below in the required detail and separately for each foreign principal an account of such monies, including monies transmitted, if any, to each foreign principal.

Date	To whom	Purpose	Amount
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- SEE ATTACHMENT 15(a)

Total

(b) DISBURSEMENTS – THINGS OF VALUE

During this 6 month reporting period, have you disposed of anything of value¹⁰ other than money in furtherance of or in connection with activities on behalf of any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement?

Yes ☐No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Date disposed	Name of person to whom given	On behalf of what foreign principal	Description of thing of value	Purpose
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(c) DISBURSEMENTS – POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

During this 6 month reporting period, have you from your own funds and on your own behalf either directly or through any other person, made any contributions of money or other things of value¹¹ in connection with an election to any political office, or in connection with any primary election, convention, or caucus held to select candidates for political office?

Yes ☐No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Date	Amount or thing of value	Name of political organization	Name of candidate
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^{10, 11} Things of value include but are not limited to gifts, interest free loans, expense free travel, favored stock purchases, exclusive rights, favored treatment over competitors, "kickbacks" and the like.

V - INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

16. During this 6 month reporting period, did you prepare, disseminate or cause to be disseminated any informational materials ^{12?}
 Yes ☒ No ☐

IF YES, RESPOND TO THE REMAINING ITEMS IN SECTION V.

17. Identify each such foreign principal.

EMBASSY OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA

18. During this 6 month reporting period, has any foreign principal established a budget or allocated a specified sum of money to finance your activities in preparing or disseminating informational materials? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, identify each such foreign principal, specify amount, and indicate for what period of time.

EMBASSY OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA

\$485,000⁰⁰

MARCH 1, 2006 - August 31, 2006

19. During this 6 month reporting period, did your activities in preparing, disseminating or causing the dissemination of informational materials include the use of any of the following:

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Radio or TV broadcasts | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Magazine or newspaper articles | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion picture films | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letters or telegrams |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advertising campaigns | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Press releases | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pamphlets or other publications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lectures or speeches |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internet | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ | | |

20. During this 6 month reporting period, did you disseminate or cause to be disseminated informational materials among any of the following groups:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Officials | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspapers | <input type="checkbox"/> Libraries |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Legislators | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Editors | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational institutions |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government agencies | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Civic groups or associations | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nationality groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ | | |

21. What language was used in the informational materials:

- ☒ English ☒ Other (specify) SPANISH

22. Did you file with the Registration Unit, U.S. Department of Justice a copy of each item of such informational materials disseminated or caused to be disseminated during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☒ No ☐

23. Did you label each item of such informational materials with the statement required by Section 4(b) of the Act? Yes ☒ No ☐

12 The term informational materials includes any oral, visual, graphic, written, or pictorial information or matter of any kind, including that published by means of advertising, books, periodicals, newspapers, lectures, broadcasts, motion pictures, or any means or instrumentality of interstate or foreign commerce or otherwise. Informational materials disseminated by an agent of a foreign principal as part of an activity in itself exempt from registration, or an activity which by itself would not require registration, need not be filed pursuant to Section 4(b) of the Act.

VI – EXECUTION

In accordance with 28 U.S.C. §1746, the undersigned swear(s) or affirm(s) under penalty of perjury that he/she has (they have) read the information set forth in this registration statement and the attached exhibits and that he/she is (they are) familiar with the contents thereof and that such contents are in their entirety true and accurate to the best of his/her (their) knowledge and belief, except that the undersigned make(s) no representation as to the truth or accuracy of the information contained in the attached Short Form Registration Statement(s), if any, insofar as such information is not within his/her (their) personal knowledge.

(Date of signature)

9/27/06

(Type or print name under each signature¹³)

S. Winger

ERIC WINGERTER

¹³ This statement shall be signed by the individual agent, if the registrant is an individual, or by a majority of those partners, officers, directors or persons performing similar functions, if the registrant is an organization, except that the organization can, by power of attorney, authorize one or more individuals to execute this statement on its behalf.

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FARA REGISTRATION UNIT
CRIMINAL DIVISION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20530**

NOTICE

Please answer the following questions and return this sheet in triplicate with your Supplemental Statement:

1. Is your answer to Item 16 of Section V (Informational Materials - page 8 of Form CRM-154, formerly Form OBD-64-Supplemental Statement):

YES YES or NO _____

(If your answer to question 1 is "yes" do not answer question 2 of this form.)

2. Do you disseminate any material in connection with your registration:

YES _____ or NO _____

(If your answer to question 2 is "yes" please forward for our review copies of all material including: films, film catalogs, posters, brochures, press releases, etc. which you have disseminated during the past six months.)

E. Wingerter
Signature

9/27/06
Date

ERIC WINGERTER
Please type or print name of
signatory on the line above

PUBLIC EDUCATION DIRECTOR
Title



U.S. Department of Justice

Criminal Division

Washington, DC 20530

THIS FORM IS TO BE AN OFFICIAL ATTACHMENT TO YOUR CURRENT SUPPLEMENTAL STATEMENT -
PLEASE EXECUTE IN TRIPLICATE

SHORT-FORM REGISTRATION INFORMATION SHEET

SECTION A

The Department records list active short-form registration statements for the following persons of your organization filed on the date indicated by each name. If a person is not still functioning in the same capacity directly on behalf of the foreign principal, please show the date of termination.

Short Form List for Registrant: Venezuela Information Office, LLC

Last Name	First Name and Other Names	Registration Date	Termination Date	Role
Gilmond	Isaura	03/18/2004		
Wingerter	Eric S.	05/24/2004		
Goumbri	Olivia B.	11/22/2005		
Mercado	Edward A.	11/22/2005		

**U.S. Department of Justice****Criminal Division**

*Washington, DC 20530***SECTION B**

In addition to those persons listed in Section A, list below all current employees rendering services directly on behalf of the foreign principals(s) who have not filed short-form registration statements. (Do not list clerks, secretaries, typists or employees in a similar or related capacity). If there is some question as to whether an employee has an obligation to file a short-form, please address a letter to the Registration Unit describing the activities and connection with the foreign principal.

Name	Function	Date Hired

Signature: S. WingettDate: 9/27/06Title: Public Education Director

Venezuela Information Office, LLC

Reg. #5609

Supplemental Statement - Financial Information - Insert for page 6

For Six Month Period Ending August 31, 2006

Section IV , 15 (a) Disbursements

Expenses	Amount Paid
Operating Expenses	\$324,616.69
Travel & Transportation	\$21,962.58
Administrative Services	\$16,589.39
Office Suplies	\$8,549.44
Total	\$371,718.10

Complementary Information:

1- No U.S. Government Officials or media representatives were guest.

2- Disbursements made to sub-contractors:

Segundo Mercado-Llorens: \$60,000.00

FARA Reporting Log-VIO			Eric Wingerter March - August 2006			
Date	Person Contacted	Position/Title	Organization	Contacted	Subject Discussed	Position Advocated
4-Mar-06	Audience at DC Conference			In Person	Venezuela and the U.S. Media	Watch for inaccuracies in Venezuela Coverage
5-Mar-06	Audience at DC Conference			In Person	Heating Oil Program	Reach out to low-income communities in need of oil
6-Mar-06	Pablo Bachalet	Reporter	Miami Herald	Phone/Email	DOE Report on foreign investment	Write about report
6-Mar-06	Juan Forero	Reporter	New York Times	Phone/Email	DOE Report on foreign investment	Write about report
6-Mar-06	Fabiola Sanchez	Reporter	Associated Press	Phone/Email	DOE Report on foreign investment	Write about report
6-Mar-06	Marcel Honore	Reporter	Associated Press	Phone/Email	DOE Report on foreign investment	Write about report
6-Mar-06	Ian James	Reporter	Associated Press	Phone/Email	DOE Report on foreign investment	Write about report
6-Mar-06	Nestor Ikeda	Reporter	Associated Press	Phone/Email	DOE Report on foreign investment	Write about report
6-Mar-06	Anthony Kennedy	Reporter	Bloomberg	Phone/Email	DOE Report on foreign investment	Write about report
6-Mar-06	Gary Marx	Reporter	Tribune Company	Phone/Email	DOE Report on foreign investment	Write about report
6-Mar-06	Peter Millard	Reporter	Tribune Company	Phone/Email	DOE Report on foreign investment	Write about report
6-Mar-06	Chris Kraul	Reporter	Los Angeles Times	Phone/Email	DOE Report on foreign investment	Write about report
6-Mar-06	Pat Markey	Reporter	Reuters	Phone/Email	DOE Report on foreign investment	Write about report
6-Mar-06	Jose Decardoba	Reporter	Wall Street Journal	Phone/Email	DOE Report on foreign investment	Write about report
6-Mar-06	Monte Reel	Reporter	Washington Post	Phone/Email	DOE Report on foreign investment	Write about report
8-Mar-06	Juan Forero	Reporter	New York Times	Phone	Delegations to Venezuela	Provided info/ on US-Ven efforts
8-Mar-06	Pablo Bachalet	Reporter	Miami Herald	Email	Report on drug cooperation	Background for future drug coverage
8-Mar-06	Juan Forero	Reporter	New York Times	Email	Report on drug cooperation	Background for future drug coverage
8-Mar-06	Fabiola Sanchez	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	Report on drug cooperation	Background for future drug coverage
8-Mar-06	Marcel Honore	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	Report on drug cooperation	Background for future drug coverage
8-Mar-06	Ian James	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	Report on drug cooperation	Background for future drug coverage
8-Mar-06	Nestor Ikeda	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	Report on drug cooperation	Background for future drug coverage
8-Mar-06	Anthony Kennedy	Reporter	Bloomberg	Email	Report on drug cooperation	Background for future drug coverage
8-Mar-06	Gary Marx	Reporter	Tribune Company	Email	Report on drug cooperation	Background for future drug coverage

8-Mar-06	Peter Millard	Reporter	Tribune Company	Email	Report on drug cooperation	Background for future drug coverage
8-Mar-06	Chris Kraul	Reporter	Los Angeles Times	Email	Report on drug cooperation	Background for future drug coverage
8-Mar-06	Pat Markey	Reporter	Reuters	Email	Report on drug cooperation	Background for future drug coverage
8-Mar-06	Jose Decardoba	Reporter	Wall Street Journal	Email	Report on drug cooperation	Background for future drug coverage
8-Mar-06	Monte Reel	Reporter	Washington Post	Email	Report on drug cooperation	Background for future drug coverage
9-Mar-06	Listserv			Email	H. Con. Res. 328 comes up for vote	Point out innacuracies to Congress
13-Mar-06	Listserv				H. Con. Res. Vote date set	Point out innacuracies to Congress
15-Mar-06	Pablo Bachalet	Reporter	Miami Herald	Email	H. Con. Res. 328	Report the many factual errors
15-Mar-06	Juan Forero	Reporter	New York Times	Email	H. Con. Res. 328	Report the many factual errors
15-Mar-06	Fabiola Sanchez	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	H. Con. Res. 328	Report the many factual errors
15-Mar-06	Marcel Honore	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	H. Con. Res. 328	Report the many factual errors
15-Mar-06	Ian James	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	H. Con. Res. 328	Report the many factual errors
15-Mar-06	Nestor Ikeda	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	H. Con. Res. 328	Report the many factual errors
15-Mar-06	Anthony Kennedy	Reporter	Bloomberg	Email	H. Con. Res. 328	Report the many factual errors
15-Mar-06	Gary Marx	Reporter	Tribune Company	Email	H. Con. Res. 328	Report the many factual errors
15-Mar-06	Peter Millard	Reporter	Tribune Company	Email	H. Con. Res. 328	Report the many factual errors
15-Mar-06	Chris Kraul	Reporter	Los Angeles Times	Email	H. Con. Res. 328	Report the many factual errors
15-Mar-06	Pat Markey	Reporter	Reuters	Email	H. Con. Res. 328	Report the many factual errors
15-Mar-06	Jose Decardoba	Reporter	Wall Street Journal	Email	H. Con. Res. 328	Report the many factual errors
15-Mar-06	Monte Reel	Reporter	Washington Post	Email	H. Con. Res. 328	Report the many factual errors
16-Mar-06	Editor		Miami Herald	Email	Innaccurate story	submitted letter to the editor in response to innacuracies
16-Mar-06	Listserv				H. Con. Res 328 pulled from vote	
20-Mar-06	Audience at Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Los Angeles			In Person	Venezuela and the Media	Become skeptical media consumers
21-Mar-06	Audience at Venezuelans living in Los Angeles			In Person	Promoting Venezuela in the Arts and Media	

21-Mar-06	Audience of Latinos in Santa Ana, California			In Person	Venezuela and the Media	Respond to inaccurate information in the press
22-Mar-06	Audience of Latino elected officials in Los Angeles			In Person	Ties between Venezuela and Latino movements in the United States	Participate in delegation to Venezuela
3/22/2006	Fabian Nunez	California State Assembly		In Person	Ties between California and Venezuela	Participate in delegation to Venezuela
22-Mar-06	Fernando Carillo	Television Actor		In Person	Promoting Venezuela in the Arts and Media	
23-Mar-06	Listserv			Email	Anti-Venezuela in Congress	Correct myths from House Resolution "whereas" clauses
23-Mar-06	Staff of Global Exchange in San Francisco			In Person	Venezuela History and the Media	Respond to inaccurate information in the press
23-Mar-06	Oakland area progressive organizations			In Person	The role of Venezuela in U.S. social movements	Respond to inaccurate information in the press
23-Feb-06	Chris Gilbert	Curator	Berkely Museum of Art	In Person	Venezuela and the Arts	Promoting Venezuelan culture in the United States
23-Mar-06	Judy Tan	CFO	Independent Television Service	In Person	Venezuela and Film	Promoting Venezuelan movies in the United States
24-Mar-06			Pacifica Radio	In Person	Venezuela, Chavez and History	the Bolivarian process and U.S. foreign policy
28-Mar-06	Linda Kuhn	Executive Secretary	International Longshore and Warehouse Union	Phone	Labor Movements in Venezuela and the United States	Create dialogue between labor movements from both countries
30-Mar-06	Yeimi Bautista	Americas Program	Center for International Policy	Phone	Visit of Venezuelan Supreme Court Justice to United States	Co-host public speaking event in Washington
30-Mar-06	Abigail Poe	Americas Program	Center for International Policy	Phone/Email	Visit of Venezuelan Supreme Court Justice to United States	Co-host public speaking event in Washington
31-Mar-06	Editor		Washington Times	Email	Innaccurate story	submitted letter to the editor in response to innacuracies
2-Apr-06	Rachel Moshman	Latin American Studies	American University	Phone/Email	Visit of Venezuelan Supreme Court Justice to United States	Host public speaking event at University
4/4/206	Dan Hellinger	Professor	Webster University	Phone/Email	Trade Relations Between U.S. and Venezuela	Speak on Capitol Hill
4-Apr-06	Juan Forero	Reporter	New York Times	Email	Innaccuracies in New York Times Story	Requested correction
4-Apr-06	Editor		New York Times	Email	Innaccurate story	submitted letter to the editor in response to innacuracies
5-Apr-06	Members of the Foreign Relations Committee		U.S. House of Representatives	Fax/Phone		Hellinger on U.S. trade relations with Venezuela
5-Apr-06	American University Latin American Clubs		American University	Email		Venezuelan supreme court justice.
13-Apr-06	Listserv			Email	Coup Anneversary	Respond to inaccurate information in the press
13-Apr-06	Editor		Washington Post	Email	Innaccuracies in Editorial	submitted letter to the editor in response to innacuracies
14-Apr-06	Denise Chiotti	Director	Womens Shelter, Wilimington Deleware	Email	Heating Oil Program	Participate in Heating oil program in Deleware
4/15/06-4/20/06	Kimberly Kelly	Massachusetts Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials

4/15/06-4/20/06	Linda Kelly	Massachusetts Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Youshana Eustay	Massachusetts Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Eugenia Lee	Massachusetts Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Jhanai Lee	Massachusetts Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Gwendolyn Bedell	New York Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Keddy Davis	New York Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Marlene Marrow	New York Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Leneice Powlett	New York Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Sonia Gonzalez	New York Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Teri White	New York Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Pamela Babb	New York Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Kimberly Liles	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials

4/15/06-4/20/06	James Sappier	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsoy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Bonnie Lee Sappier	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsoy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Lisa Marie Stewart	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsoy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Mike Sockalexis	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsoy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Erline Marie Paul	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsoy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Wayne Thomas Mitchell	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsoy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Clarice Chavaree	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsoy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Brenda Ann Fields	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsoy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Sarah DeWitt	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsoy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Julie Miller	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsoy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Brenda Commander	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsoy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Justin Kobylarz	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsoy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials

4/15/06-4/20/06	April Reynolds	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Michele Le Fey	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Mark Altwater	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Monica Altwater	Delaware Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Denise Ciotti	Delaware Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Alexis Ciotti	Delaware Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Louise Hetrick	Pennsylvania Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Tina Betz		Office of Wilmington Mayor James Baker	In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Monica Gonzalez-Gillespe		Office of Wilmington Mayor James Baker	In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Kash Srinivassan		Office of Wilmington Mayor James Baker	In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Jeannie Ruminski	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Corbett	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philosophy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials

4/15/06-4/20/06	Russell Anderson	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Maryrowena Winters	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Alan Keith	Massachusetts Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Mary Jo Sellick	Maine Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Henry Will	Pennsylvania Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Donna Santiago	Pennsylvania Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Monica Santiago	Pennsylvania Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Rhiannon-Ginet Santiago	Pennsylvania Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Geneva Anderson	Pennsylvania Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Dante Anderson	Pennsylvania Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Lisa Jane Clarke	Pennsylvania Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Michael Billingslev	Vermont Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials

4/15/06-4/20/06	Annie Simoneau	Vermont Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	James Simoneau	Vermont Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Peggy Longueil	Vermont Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Roland Boyden	Vermont Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Hal Cohen	Vermont Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Bill Lable	Connecticut Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Mable Collins	Connecticut Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Richard Bishop	Connecticut Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Rocio Digon	Connecticut Heating Oil Recipient		In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
4/15/06-4/20/06	Michelle Sherwood		Office of Congressman Charles Rangel	In Person	Social Movements in Venezuela & Bolivarian philsofy	Participate in a delegation to Venezuela to discuss heating oil program with civil society and government officials
18-Apr-06	Susan Scott	Attorney	National Lawyers Guild	Email	The Rule of Law in Venezuela	Present findings from recent delegation on Capitol Hill
20-Apr-06	Listserv			Email	Radio Marti to Venezuela proposal	Ask readers to work with local media to clarify the state of the press in Venezuela
27-Apr-06	Nelly Sanchez	Reporter	Bangor Daily News	Phone	Heating Oil Program	Interviewed on Delegation of Heating Oil Recipients to Venezuela
28-Apr-06	Listserv			Email	Posada Applies for U.S. Citizenship	

2-May-06	Emily Higgins	Reporter	Discovery Times Channel	Phone/Email	Documentary on Venezuela	Venezuelan barrios rather than just government and business
3-May-06	Susan Scott	Attorney	National Lawyers Guild	Phone	The Rule of Law in Venezuela	Present findings from recent delegation on Capitol Hill
3-May-06	Peter Hardy	Attorney	NAACP	Phone	The Rule of Law in Venezuela	Present findings from recent delegation on Capitol Hill
3-May-06	Laura Safer-Espinoza	Justice	Supreme Court of New York	Phone	The Rule of Law in Venezuela	Present findings from recent delegation on Capitol Hill
3-May-06	Art Heitzer	Attorney	National Lawyers Guild	Phone	The Rule of Law in Venezuela	Present findings from recent delegation on Capitol Hill
3-May-06	Pamela Babb	Director	Mt. Hope Housing	Phone/Email	Heating Oil Program	Speak on New York Radio show on her experiences
3-May-06	Jerry Quickly	Host	Jerry Quickly Show	Phone	Heating Oil Program	Participated in radio program
3-May-06	Editor		New York Times	Email	Innaccuracies in Story	submitted letter to the editor in response to innaccuracies
4-May-06	Doug Savage	Producer	Wisconsin State NPR	Phone/Email	US-Venezuelan Relations	Interview regarding building better relations between the US and Venezuela
5-May-06	Listserv			Email	Democracy in Venezuela	Contact members of Congress regarding Venezuela
5-May-06	Andy Maykuth	Reporter	Philadelphia Enquirer	Phone/Email	Heating Oil Program	Provide statistics for article
5-May-06	Audrey Sasson	Reporter	Alternative Press	In Person	Heating Oil Program	Include statistics for article
9-May-06	Juan Forero	Reporter	New York Times	Phone/Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on innaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Fabiola Sanchez	Reporter	Associated Press	Phone/Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on innaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Marcel Honore	Reporter	Associated Press	Phone/Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on innaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Ian James	Reporter	Associated Press	Phone/Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on innaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Nestor Ikeda	Reporter	Associated Press	Phone/Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on innaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Anthony Kennedy	Reporter	Bloomberg	Phone/Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on innaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Gary Marx	Reporter	Tribune Company	Phone/Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on innaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Peter Millard	Reporter	Tribune Company	Phone/Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on innaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Chris Kraul	Reporter	Los Angeles Times	Phone/Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on innaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Pat Markey	Reporter	Reuters	Phone/Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on innaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Jose Decardoba	Reporter	Wall Street Journal	Phone/Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on innaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Monte Reel	Reporter	Washington Post	Phone/Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on innaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Juan Forero	Reporter	New York Times	Phone	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on innaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Pablo Bachalet	Reporter	Miami Herald	Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on innaccuracies in "whereas" clauses

9-May-06	Juan Forero	Reporter	New York Times	Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on inaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Fabiola Sanchez	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on inaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Marcel Honore	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on inaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Ian James	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on inaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Nestor Ikeda	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on inaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Anthony Kennedy	Reporter	Bloomberg	Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on inaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Gary Marx	Reporter	Tribune Company	Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on inaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Peter Millard	Reporter	Tribune Company	Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on inaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Chris Kraul	Reporter	Los Angeles Times	Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on inaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Pat Markey	Reporter	Reuters	Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on inaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Jose Decardoba	Reporter	Wall Street Journal	Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on inaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Monte Reel	Reporter	Washington Post	Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Report on inaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
9-May-06	Listserv			Email	House Resolution on Drug Cooperation	Clarify inaccuracies in "whereas" clauses
10-May-06	Editor		Washington Post	Email	Inaccuracies in Story	submitted letter to the editor in response to inaccuracies
10-May-06	Merri Ancira	Director	Common Ground Travel	Phone/Email	Delegations to Venezuela	Provided advice on setting up barrio visits in Caracas
11-May-06	Members of the Foreign Relations Committee		U.S. House of Representative	Fax	Resolution re: Venezuela and Drugs	inaccuracies in "whereas" clauses of resolution
12-May-06	Danna Harmon	Reporter	Christian Science Monitor	Email	Oil extraction in Venezuela	Include clarifying government numbers in reporting
15-May-06	Kit Gage	Director	First Amendment Institute	Phone/Email	Rule of Law in Venezuela	Participate in meeting with Embassy staff
15-May-06	Julian Bond	President	NAACP	Phone/Email	Rule of Law in Venezuela	Participate in meeting with Embassy staff
15-May-06	Gene Bruskin	Attorney	National Lawyers Guild	Phone/Email	Rule of Law in Venezuela	Participate in meeting with Embassy staff
15-May-06	Rebecca Stevens	Attorney	National Lawyers Guild	Phone/Email	Rule of Law in Venezuela	Participate in meeting with Embassy staff
15-May-06	Carl Goldman	Attorney	AFSCME	Phone/Email	Rule of Law in Venezuela	Participate in meeting with Embassy staff
15-May-06	Jim Klimanski	Attorney	National Lawyers Guild	Phone/Email	Rule of Law in Venezuela	Participate in meeting with Embassy staff
15-May-06	Art Heitzer	Attorney	National Lawyers Guild	Phone/Email	Rule of Law in Venezuela	Participate in meeting with Embassy staff

15-May-06	Peter Graham Cohen	Attorney	National Lawyers Guild	Phone/Email	Rule of Law in Venezuela	Participate in meeting with Embassy staff
15-May-06	Susan Scott	Attorney	National Lawyers Guild	Phone/Email	Rule of Law in Venezuela	Participate in meeting with Embassy staff
15-May-06	Laura Safer-Espinoza	Justice	Supreme Court of New York	Phone/Email	Rule of Law in Venezuela	Participate in meeting with Embassy staff
17-May-06	Editor		Washington Times	Email	Innaccuracies in Story	submitted letter to the editor in response to innaccuracies
18-May-06	Members of the Foreign Relations Committee		U.S. House of Representative	Phone/Email	Rule of Law in Venezuela	National Lawyers Guild on Capitol Hill
19-May-06	Listserv			Email	US Imposes Arms Embargo on Venezuela	Clarify innaccuracies in the logic behind embargo
22-May-06	Rachel Ganong	Reporter	The Times Record	Phone/Email	Heating Oil Program	Worked with reporters to include specifics of Citgo Heating oil program
23-May-06	Nestor Ikeda	Reporter	Associated Press	In Person	Rule of Law in Venezuela	Include National Lawyer's Guild report in coverage
25-May-06	Editor		The Washington Post	Email	Innaccuracies in Story	submitted letter to the editor in response to innaccuracies
26-May-06	Listserv			Email	New report on poverty rates	Educate colleagues on poverty in Venezuela
30-May-06	Andy Maykuth	Reporter	Philadelphia Enquirer	Email	Heating Oil Program	Correct inaccurate facts in story
6-Jun-06	Audience at Ohm Shanti Center			In Person	Venezuela-US relations	Help create better relations
8-Jun-06	Editor		Miami Herald	Email	Innaccuracies in Story	submitted letter to the editor in response to innaccuracies
8-Jun-06	Editor		New York Times	Email	Innaccuracies in Story	submitted letter to the editor in response to innaccuracies
8-Jun-06	Listserv			Email	Claims of Chavez "meddling" in foreign elections	Explore the background of allegations
15-Jun-06	Editor		Bloomberg	Email	Innaccuracies in Story	submitted letter to the editor in response to innaccuracies
20-Jun-06	Susan Glasser	Editor	Washington Post	Phone/Email	Outlook Section reporting	Correct inaccurate facts in story
21-Jun-06	Bob Chernow		Milwaukee Chamber of Commerce	Phone	Sister city program Milwaukee-Carora	business leaders for meeting with Carora mayor
24-Jun-06	Editor		Los Angeles Times	Email	Innaccuracies in Story	submitted letter to the editor in response to innaccuracies
27-Jun-06	John Pilger	Documentary Film maker		Phone/Email	Venezuela film	prominent opposition leaders in United States
27-Jun-06	Megan Reichgott	Reporter	Associated Press	Phone	Patriotism survey on Venezuela	survey in story
28-Jun-06	Editor		Washington Post	Email	Innaccuracies in Story	submitted letter to the editor in response to innaccuracies
29-Jun-06	Listserv			Email	Washington Post questions "legitimacy" of Chavez	Readers asked to draft letters to the Editor in response.
29-Jun-06	Bob Chernow		Milwaukee Chamber of Commerce	Phone	Sister city program Milwaukee-Carora	Chair meeting between US & Venezuelan business leaders
29-Jun-06	John Pilger	Documentary Film maker		Phone	Venezuela film	Suggested further interviewees in United States
29-Jun-06	Art Heitzer	Attorney	National Lawyers Guild	Email	Washington Post Editorial	Respond to inaccurate information in the press

29-Jun-06	Laura Wells		Marin InterFaith Task Force	Email	Washington Post Editorial	Respond to inaccurate information in the press
29-Jun-06	Dan Hellinger	Professor	Webster University	Email	Washington Post Editorial	Respond to inaccurate information in the press
29-Jun-06	Gunnar Gunderson	Professor	Willamette College	Email	Washington Post Editorial	Respond to inaccurate information in the press
29-Jun-06	Jorge Marin	Coordinator	Circulo Bolivariano Martin Luther King	Email	Washington Post Editorial	Respond to inaccurate information in the press
29-Jun-06	Steve Ellner	Professor	Universidad del Oriente	Email	Washington Post Editorial	Respond to inaccurate information in the press
29-Jun-06	Robert Naiman	Director	Just Foreign Policy	Email	Washington Post Editorial	Respond to inaccurate information in the press
29-Jun-06	Shirley Pate	Board Member	Ecumenical Program on Latin America & the Caribbean	Email	Washington Post Editorial	Respond to inaccurate information in the press
29-Jun-06	Ricardo Moreno	Director	Simon Bolivar Association	Email	Washington Post Editorial	Respond to inaccurate information in the press
29-Jun-06	Chuck Kauffman	Coordinator	Venezuela Solidarity Network	Email	Washington Post Editorial	Respond to inaccurate information in the press
29-Jun-06	Gila Neta	PhD Candidate	Johns Hopkins University	Email	Washington Post Editorial	Respond to inaccurate information in the press
30-Jun-06	Nick Sohr	Reporter	Congressional Quarterly	Phone	Popularity of President Chavez	Provided background and polling data for story
2-Jul-06	John Pilger	Documentary Film maker		Phone/Email	Venezuela film	Suggested further interviewees in United States
3-Jul-06	Evan Jones	Host	"Talk City" radio program	phone	Venezuela's democracy	participated in long-ranging interview on many aspects of Venezuela's democracy.
5-Jul-06	Dana Garrett	DJ	Deleware Public Radio	Phone	Heating Oil Program	Discussed the expansion of heating oil deals in Delaware on evening drivetime radio
5-Jul-06	Editor		Miami Herald	Email	Innaccuracies in Story	submitted letter to the editor in response to innaccuracies
10-Jul-06	Felix Arroyo	City Councilor	Boston	In Person	Delegations to Venezuela	Participate in delegation to Venezuela
10-Jul-06	Gil Cedillo	Senator	State of California	Phone	Delegations to Venezuela	Participate in delegation to Venezuela
10-Jul-06	Julian Bond	Director	NAACP	Phone	Delegations to Venezuela	Participate in delegation to Venezuela
10-Jul-06	Olga Vives	Vice President	National Organization for Women	Phone	Delegations to Venezuela	Participate in delegation to Venezuela
10-Jul-06	Laura Safer-Espinoza	Justice	Supreme Court of New York	Phone	Delegations to Venezuela	Participate in delegation to Venezuela
10-Jul-06	Emily Goodman	Justice	Supreme Court of New York	Phone	Delegations to Venezuela	Participate in delegation to Venezuela
10-Jul-06	Billy Ocasio	City Councilor	Chicago	Phone	Delegations to Venezuela	Participate in delegation to Venezuela
10-Jul-06	Bob Chernow		Milwaukee Chamber of Commerce	Phone	Sister city program Milwaukee-Carora	business leaders to begin exchange w/ Venezuela
13-Jul-06	Listserv			Email	Venezuela's Presidential Elections	watchers

14-Jul-06	Erik Sperling	Member	Milwaukee Bolivarian Circle	Phone/Email	Sister city program Milwaukee-Carora	social movements for Carora mayor
14-Jul-06	Babette Grunow	Member	Milwaukee Bolivarian Circle	Phone/Email	Sister city program Milwaukee-Carora	social movements for Carora mayor
15-Jul-06	Whitney Gould	Reporter	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	Email	Carora Architecture	Write about Carora's colonial architecture in column
15-Jul-06	Gunnar Gunderson	Professor	Willamette College	Email	Miami Herald Story	information in the press
18-Jul-06	Editor		Los Angeles Times	Email	Innaccuracies in Story	submitted letter to the editor in response to innaccuracies
19-Jul-06	Evan Derkacz	Reporter	Alternet	Email	Anti-Semitism Rumors	Report on Translation of Chavez comments
19-Jul-06	Pablo Bachalet	Reporter	Miami Herald	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Juan Forero	Reporter	New York Times	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Fabiola Sanchez	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Marcel Honore	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Ian James	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Nestor Ikeda	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Anthony Kennedy	Reporter	Bloomberg	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Gary Marx	Reporter	Tribune Company	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Peter Millard	Reporter	Tribune Company	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Chris Kraul	Reporter	Los Angeles Times	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Pat Markey	Reporter	Reuters	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Jose Decardoba	Reporter	Wall Street Journal	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Monte Reel	Reporter	Washington Post	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Juan Forero	Reporter	New York Times	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Pablo Bachalet	Reporter	Miami Herald	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Juan Forero	Reporter	New York Times	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Fabiola Sanchez	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Marcel Honore	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Ian James	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Nestor Ikeda	Reporter	Associated Press	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending

19-Jul-06	Anthony Kennedy	Reporter	Bloomberg	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Gary Marx	Reporter	Tribune Company	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Peter Millard	Reporter	Tribune Company	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Chris Kraul	Reporter	Los Angeles Times	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Pat Markey	Reporter	Reuters	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Jose Decardoba	Reporter	Wall Street Journal	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
19-Jul-06	Monte Reel	Reporter	Washington Post	Email	Military Spending in Venezuela	Report the context of Venezuela's spending
20-Jul-06	Listserv			Email	Venezuelan presidential elections	the Editor in response to mistakes in Miami Herald
28-Jul-06	Listserv			Email	New Venezuelan poll results	
4-Aug-06	Listserv			Email	Erroneous election story in The Economist	Readers asked to draft letters to the editor in response
6-Aug-06	Bradley Wooten	Reporter	Small Business Times	Phone	Business exchanges between Milwaukee and Venezuela	small business owners planning to increase trade with
7-Aug-06	Listserv			Email	Innaccurate Washington Post Story	innacuracies in story with letters to the editor
8-Aug-06	Larry Birns	Director	Council on Hemispheric Affairs	Phone	Anti-Drug policy	Resolution on Venezuelan Drug efforts
10-Aug-06	Listserv			Email	Selection of opposition "unity" candidate.	
23-Aug-06	Listserv			Email	U.S. sets up "operations manager" for Venezuela	Readers asked to voice their opinion in local newspapers.
25-Aug-06	Marie Dennis	Director	Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns	Phone/Email	Meeting with United Nations Ambassador	Participate in Meeting
25-Aug-06	Chris Kirk	Vice President	NAACP	Phone/Email	Meeting with United Nations Ambassador	Participate in Meeting
26-Aug-06	Sarah Stevens	Director	Stevens Group	Phone	Delegations to Venezuela	organizations in Venezuela for delegation

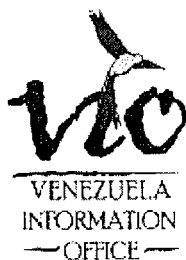
FARA Reporting Log-VIO			<i>Olivia Goumbri March-August 2006</i>			
Date	Person Contacted	Position/Title	Organization	Contacted	Subject Discussed	Position Advocated
1-Mar-06	Chuck Kauffman	Organizer	Nicaragau Network	Email	Lobby day discussion	Announce the location of lobby discussion
3-Mar-06	Award ceremony			In Person	Heating Oil Program	communities in need of oil
5-Mar-06	Conference			In Person	Heating Oil Program	communities in need of oil
9-Mar-06	Audience at lobby day discussion		Venezuela Solidarity Network	Phone/Email	Report on lobby day	Write about lobby meetings
9-Mar-06	Daniel Brito	Congressional Staffer	Rep. Grijalva	Phone/Email	Academic speaking on Venezuela	Find a space for hill meeting and send out announcement
9-Mar-06	Dan Hellinger	Academic	Webster University	Phone/Email	Hill briefing	Speak at hill briefing
9-Mar-06	Leslie Salgado	Organizer	Howard County Friends of Latin America	Phone/Email	Lobby meetings	Write about lobby meetings
9-Mar-06	Leslie Salgado	Organizer	Howard County Friends of Latin America	Phone/Email	Human Rights in Venezuela	Forward action alert
13-Mar-06	NY list serve			Email	H.Con. Res328	Call representative about resolution
14-Mar-06	Sarah Stephens	Program director	Center for International Policy	email	Hill briefing	Moderate briefing
15-Mar-06	Gail and Peter Mott	Organizers	ROCLA	Phone/Email	H.Con. Res328	Call representative about resolution
21-Mar-06	Angelo Rivero-santos	Professor	Georgetown University	Phone/Email	Supreme Court Justice visit	organize event at Georgetown
24-Mar-06	Jim Drew	lawyer	National Lawyers Guild	Phone/Email	Supreme Court Justice visit	send out announcement on event
30-Mar-06	Noam chomsky	professor/writer	MIT	Phone/Email	Venezuelan elections delegations	Participate in delegation to Venezuela
31-Mar-06	Shirley Pate	Organizer	Hait, Cuba, Venezuela Project	Phone/Email	distorted story in Washington Times	Respond with letter to editor
31-Mar-06	DC email list			Email	Venezuela event	participate in April commemorative event
31-Mar-06	Congressional staff	Staffers	Congress	Email	Hill briefing	Attend hill briefing
3-Apr-06	Daniel Brito	Congressional Staffer	Rep. Grijalva	Email	Hill briefing	Send out announcement on hill briefing
4-Apr-06	Peter and Gail Mott	Organizers	ROCLA	Email	New York Times story	Write letter to editor
4-Apr-06	Lobby day participants			Email	Town hall meetings	Attend members town hall meetings
7-Apr-06	Netfa Freeman	Program director	IPS	Email	Event with Supreme court justice	Send out announcement
7-Apr-06	Listserv			Email	Supporting democracy	Join rapid response network
11-Apr-06	Burt Shane	Organizer	Venezuela Solidarity Network	Email	innacurate story	Write letter to editor
11-Apr-06	Jerry Pendergest	Organizer	Venezuela Solidarity Network	Email	innacurate story	Write letter to editor
11-Apr-06	Floyd Britton	Organizer	Venezuela Solidarity Network	Email	innacurate story	Write a letter to editor
12-Apr-06	Dale and George Sorenson	Organizers	Marin Interfaith Task Force	Email	innacurate story	Write a letter to editor
12-Apr-06	Chicago list serve			Email	innacurate story	Write a letter to editor
13-Apr-06	Lobby day participants			Email/phone	National lobby week	Visit members
24-Apr-06	Susan Scott	former lawyer	National Lawyers Guild	Email	trip to Venezuela	Speak at and help organize legal hill briefing
25-Apr-06	Babette Grunow	Organizer	Bolivarian circle Milwaukee	Email	innacurate story	Write op-ed
2-May-06	Laura Safer-Espinoza	Judge	NY Circuit	Email	innacurate story	Write letter to editor
2-May-06	Ian Campbell	Congressional Staffer	Rep. Meeks	Email	layers in Venezuela	Sponsor a hill briefing
5-May-06	Chuck Kauffman	Organizer	Nicaragau Network	Email	lobby week	Send out announcement
8-May-06	Ian Campbell	Congressional Staffer	Rep. Meeks	Email	Hill briefing	Send dear colleague

8-May-06	Art Heitzer	lawyer	National Lawyers Guild	Email	Hill briefing	Send out announcement
30-Jun-06	dan Beeton	Program director	CEPR	Email	finding a speaker	Organize hill briefing
7-Jul-06	Dan Hellinger	Professor	Webster University	Email	Lobby day discussion	help with lobby day proposal
10-Jul-06	Sue Ashdown	Individual		Email	innacurate story	Write a letter to editor
17-Jul-06	George and dale Sorenson	Organizers	Marin Interfaith Task Force	Email/Phone	LA bad press	Write letter to editor
18-Jul-06	olga Vives	Vice President	NOW	Email	Venezuelan elections delegations	Help organize a delegation
18-Jul-06	Carolina Espinal	Program director	NAACP	Email	Venezuelan elections delegations	Help organize a delegation
20-Jul-06	pablo Bachelet/Phil Gunson	Reporters	Miami Herald	Email	their story	they got the fact wrong
24-Jul-06	Daniel Brito	Congressional Staffer	Rep. Grijalva	Email	innacurate story	write a letter from member to Herald
26-Jul-06	Laura Safer-Espinoza	Judge	NY Circuit	Email	Innacurate story	write a letter to the editor
1-Aug-06	Crispian Kirk	International Director	NAACP	email/phone	elections in venezuela	Help organize a delegation
7-Aug-06	Sue Ashdown	Individual		Email	innacurate story	write a letter to the editor
8-Aug-06	Chicago list serve			email	innacurate story	write a letter to the editor
15-Aug-06	Boston list serve			email	innacurate story	write a letter to the editor
15-Aug-06	NY list serve			Email	innacurate story	write a letter to the editor
17-Aug-06	Dan Chong	Professor	American University	Email	Venezuelan elections	Help organize an event on elections
30-Aug-06	Graham Russel	Director	Rights Action	Phone/email	UN security council seat	write on issue
30-Aug-06	Joan drake	organizer	WILPF	Phone/email	UN security council seat	write on issue
30-Aug-06	Thomas Gumbleton	Bishop		Phone/email	UN security council seat	write on issue

FARA Reporting Log-VIO		Contacts and outreach	Edward Mercado March 2006-			
Date	Person Contacted	Position/Title	Organization	How Contacted	Subject Discussed	Position Advocated
1-Mar	Jesus Soto	Producer	Radio Defensa	Email/Phone	Media Workshop	Work on public presentation
1-Mar	Antonio Gonzales	Director	William Velazques Institute	Phone	Delegation Workshop	Set time and agenda for public presentation
2-Mar	Deborah James	Director	Public Citizen	Phone	Delegation Workshop	Set time and agenda for panel discussion
2-Mar	Martin Pacheco	Counsul	Venezuela Consulate in Boston	Phone	Media Workshop	Work on public presentation
4-Mar	National Solidarity Conference	Edward Mercado	Venezuela Information Office	Workshop	Delegations to Venezuela	Visit the country to better understand participatory
5-Mar	National Solidarity Conference	Edward Mercado	Venezuela Information Office	Workshop	Alternative Media	Better use of community media / alternative media
5-Mar	Sally O'brien	Producer	WBAI Pacifica Radio	Radio Show	National Solidarity Conference	No US Intervention in Venezuela
10-Mar	Jennifer Wagger	Producer	Venezuela Rising DVD	Email	Venezuela Rising Documentary distribution	Will provide DVD to VIO
3-Mar	Cameron McGlothlin	Manager	American Council of Young Political	Phone & Email	Vdelegation to Venezuela	Include grassroots visits to itinerary
21-Mar	Jacqueline Faria	Minister	Venezuelan Enviroment Minister	Phone & Email	Earth Day	Participate in april 22 earth day event
22-Mar	Exeario Sosa	Artist	Trovagueros	Email	Public Event	Send mp3 samples
30-Mar	Jesus Soto	Producer	Venezuela	Phone	Vio on the Radio	show
30-Mar	Peter Pollis	Consular Services	State Department	Email / Phone	Positive Information on Venezuela	Sent him materials requested music/books
31-Mar	Skipper	Director	nuamerica Media	Email / Phone	Venezuela Rising documentary	Please bring copy to office for public event
31-Mar	Jennifer Wagger	Producer	nuamerica media	Email / Phone	Venezuela Rinsing	Permission to reproduce documentary
31-Mar	Christina Perez	Professor of Sociology	Dominican University	Email / Phone	Future Delegation to Venezuela	Write and send proposal for review
31-Mar	Christy Smith	Editor	San Francisco Bay	Email	Written OPED	Publish article in publication
31-Mar	Tahis Soto	Producer	Radio Defensa	Email / Phone	Vio on the Radio	Send RDV audience stats

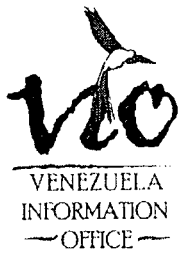
3-Apr	Andrew Mugisha	Activist	Forum for Democratic Change	Email	Afro American Exchange	Send written proposal
3-Apr	Williams Camacaro	Activist	Bolivarian Circle Alberto Lovera	Email/Phone	Afro American Exchange	Follow up with african Vice Minister
7-Apr	Mark Weisbrot	Co-Director	CEPR	Phone	Film Showing Panel	Participation in public panel about Venezuela
7-Apr	Deborah James	Director	Public Citizen Global Trade Watch	Email	Film Showing Panel	Participate in Public Event
7-Apr	Roland Roebuck	Activist	Media DC	Email	Afro American Exchange	Send critiria for delegates selection
12-Apr	Juan Manson	Activist	Bolivarian Circle Orlando	Email	Bad article on Miami Herald	Response to newspaper
12-Apr	Ricardo Moreno	Director	Asociacion Simon Bolivar	Email	Bad article on LA Times	Response to newspaper
12-Apr	Canela Saenz	Activist	Bolivarian Circle Manuelita Saenz	Email	Bad article on LA Times	Response to newspaper
12-Apr	Norberto Martinez	Producer	Radio Pacifica DC	Email	Radio Show on Venezuela	Confirm Time and agenda for interview
13-Apr	Public Event / Edward Mercado	Coordinator	Venezuela Information Office	Speaker	Venezuela 2002 coup de'tat	Questions and answer with public
13-Apr	KPFK DC/ Edward Mercado	Coordinator	Venezuela Information Office	Speaker	Venezuela 2002 coup de'tat	Recalled events in Venezuela during 2002 coup
13-Apr	KPFW CA / Edward Mercado	Coordinator	Venezuela Information Office	Speaker	Venezuela 2002 coup de-tat	Recalled events in Venezuela during 2002 coup
21-Apr	Antonio Calderon	Director	Doral Design	Email	Publications	Order DVD's for distribution
27-Apr	Antonio Calderon	Director	Doral Design	Email	DVD Project	Send proposal for Vzla
6-Jun	Netfa freeman	Director	SALSA	Email	Local Film Showing	Help to organize future
8-Jun	Shawn swartz	Student affairs	Miami University	Phone	Forum on Venezuela	Give guidelines and room information
9-Jun	Stephanie Farmer	Sociologist	Chicago University	Email	Delegation to Venezuela	Write essay for application process
12-Jun	USVEN listserv			Email	Solidarity Delegation to Venezuela	Write essay for application process
27-Jun	Public Event / Edward Mercado		Miami University	Hall	Venezuelan Past and Present	Gave presentation to 40 students
30-Jun	Nihar Bhratt	Organizer	CEPR	Email	Venezuela delegation	Send final flyer

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**Venezuela Information Office
Materials Disseminated
March 1-August 31 2006**

Part I: Fact Sheets



Venezuela Information Office
2000 P Street NW Suite 240
Washington, DC 20036
Voice: (202) 347-8081
Fax: (202) 347-8091

FACTS ABOUT VENEZUELAN ELECTIONS

Elections in Venezuela are “free and fair” according to international observers.

In 1998, 2000, 2004 and 2005, international observers, including the Organization of American States (OAS), the U.S.-based Carter Center, and a delegation from the European Union characterized elections in Venezuela as “free and fair”.¹ Additionally, the OAS wrote in their report on Venezuela’s National Assembly elections last year that voter privacy was respected and that the right to a secret ballot was upheld.² While some factions among Venezuelan opposition parties have made numerous allegations against the Venezuelan elections authorities, they have never provided evidence to support their claims.

The National Electoral Council (CNE) is an independent panel of experts.

Venezuelan elections are overseen by a National Electoral Council (known as the “CNE” for its Spanish acronym). Under the Venezuelan Constitution, the CNE is a branch of government separate from the Executive, Legislative or Judicial branches, and as such is better protected from political biases or pressure. Today, the CNE board is made up of technical experts, including board president Tibisay Lucena, who has more than ten years experience with electoral issues, and is one of Venezuela’s primary experts on issues of voter access.

Venezuela’s electronic voting system has a paper receipts and multiple safeguards

Venezuela’s electronic voting machines are among the most sophisticated in the world. Unlike voting machines in the United States, the SmartMatic technology used in Venezuela records the vote electronically and through the use of a paper receipt. This means that if the tally of a particular voting center is challenged, elections authorities can conduct a manual recount of the paper receipts. As Senator Bill Nelson, a Florida Republican, commented, “The State of Florida is not even doing that with a paper trail, so maybe Venezuela will teach Florida something.”³

To eliminate this possibility of machine tampering, the CNE has invested in a technology that splits the source code for the machines into four parts, which are then divided among stakeholders, including a representative from the CNE, opposition parties, pro-government coalitions and international observers. In order for *any* change to the coding of the computers to be implemented, each of these parties must access the machines simultaneously.

Just before the 2004 referendum, Jennifer McCoy, Director of the Americas Program of the Carter Center, reported that her team received a full presentation from Venezuela’s electoral authorities on the SmartMatic machines that will be used, and that “we were very impressed with the presentation that we received, the security measures that were shown to us, and the functioning of the machine that we witnessed.”⁴ [Click here](#)

¹ “Venezuelan Ballot Gets Confidence Vote.” David Luhnnow and Jose de Cordoba. *The Wall Street Journal*. August 20, 2004.

² The final *Report of the Electoral Observer Mission in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela’s 2005 Parliamentary Elections*. Organization of American States, 2006.

³ Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Hearing on Venezuela, June 24, 2004.

⁴ “Electronic Touch-Screens Tested For Venezuela Recall Vote,” Associated Press, July 18, 2004.

The Venezuela Information Office is dedicated to informing the American public about contemporary Venezuela, and receives its funding from the government of Venezuela. Further information is available from the FARA office of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

for more on Venezuela's electronic voting system:
<http://www.rethinkvenezuela.com/downloads/electricvote.htm>

Venezuela's voter registry has been improved and audited.

Historically, Venezuela's voter registry has been poorly maintained. In part, this is due to the conditions of poverty. For example, those who live in makeshift houses in Venezuela's vast shantytowns have no official address, and may register at the address of a relative or even a local community center. This can result in dozens of voters registered under the same address. In other cases, sloppy maintenance at the local level has meant that thousands of voters have remained on the rolls long after an individual has died.

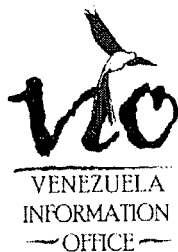
To ensure that the registry is as accurate and up-to-date as possible, the CNE has overseen five separate nationwide audits in recent years. International observers, including the Carter Center and a delegation from the Dutch parliament, have monitored these audits. See the results of the latest CNE audit here:
<http://www.rethinkvenezuela.com/downloads/elecereg.htm>

A recent independent audit conducted by three major Caracas Universities found that there has been no effort by Venezuelan authorities to manipulate the registry in any way.⁵ The independent bill of health was particularly significant because the elite institutions, Universidad Central de Venezuela, Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, and Simón Bolívar University, are generally aligned with Venezuela's opposition movements.

Polls show most Venezuelans still support President Hugo Chavez.

According to the most recent polls, the majority of Venezuelans continue to support President Chavez by wide margins. In the year 2000, President Chavez was elected to a six year term with 59.5% of the vote. In 2004, voters re-affirmed their support for Chavez by defeating a recall referendum with 59% of the vote. Today, various polls, including those commissioned by opposition parties, place Chavez's popularity between 52 and 59%. Significantly, no single opposition candidate has garnered more than 10% support from likely voters. Keep up to date with the latest polling results here:
<http://www.rethinkvenezuela.com/downloads/polling2006.htm>

⁵ "Coordinador de estudios sobre el Registro Electoral de las universidades Católica, UCV y Simón Bolívar dice que no hay nada que sugiera fraude," Globovision, July 19, 2006. <http://www.globovision.com/news.php?nid=33310>



Venezuela Information Office
2000 P Street, NW Suite 240
Washington, DC 20036
Voice: (202) 347-8081
Fax: (202) 347-8091

Venezuela's Electoral System Past & Present

After the fall of Venezuelan dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez in 1958, the country's major political parties entered into an agreement known as the Punto Fijo Pact. Under the terms of the pact, Democratic Action (AD), and the Social Christian Party (COPEI) agreed to share cabinet positions and the control of state institutions regardless of who won the elections. The result was that all other political parties were effectively shut out from Venezuela's political life. This period, which lasted until President Chávez was elected in 1998, "created hierarchical national organizations and relied on oil revenues to satisfy the needs of their [the parties] major constituencies."¹ In other words, the major political parties and their supporters received economic benefits while other parties—largely representing the interests of the poor-- were systematically left out. The system was famously corrupt, as the two parties conspired to set rules that consolidated their hold on power.

The Art of Exclusion and Acta Mata Voto (1958-1998)

Over the years, outside political parties attempted to challenge the Punto Fijo system by running candidates against AD and COPEI, but the system was stacked in favor of the major parties. Third parties were marginalized and in some cases, banned outright. In 1962, for example the government headed by Romulo Bentancourt banned the Communist Party and criminalized membership in left wing organizations.²

The voting system during this period relied on hand counts of paper ballots, a system that became easy for ruling powers to manipulate. AD and COPEI officials would lead the vote count, and blatantly divided up third party votes between themselves before adding them to the official tally. The two parties were so powerful that they made no effort to hide this process, which was commonly referred to as "*acta mata voto*," or "the tally trumps the vote."³ To further complicate things the national elections authority, responsible for overseeing elections, was a part of the executive branch and beholden to the party in power. For this reason, independent audits of the elections or the voter registry were never carried out. The system contributed to widespread voter apathy in the majority of Venezuelans who believed, credibly, that their voice would never be represented by political leaders.

Voter Disenfranchisement & Reform

As late as 1998 less than half of all voting age Venezuelans were registered to vote, due in part to apathy, but also to a system that made no effort to reach out to poor and marginalized citizens. During the Punto Fijo era, registering was time-consuming and difficult for the poor, who were

¹ McCoy, Jennifer "Chavez and the End of "Partyarchy" in Venezuela" Journal of Democracy - Volume 10, Number 3, July 1999, pp. 64-77 [The Johns Hopkins University Press](http://www.johns-hopkins.edu/~press/)

² Wikipedia Encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_Venezuela

³ Trankunas, Harold and Jennifer McCoy, "Special Report: Observation of the 1998 Venezuelan Elections", pp. 20 <http://www.cartercenter.org/documents/1151.pdf#search=%22acta%20mata%20voto%22>

The Venezuela Information Office is dedicated to informing the American public about contemporary Venezuela, and receives its funding from the government of Venezuela. Further information is available from the FARA office of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

required to prove their citizenship in order to vote. National identification cards, required for voter registration, were hard to come by. Birth Certificates were issued primarily at urban hospitals, but for millions of Venezuelans born in rural areas or at home, it would be an arduous process to prove that you were, indeed, a Venezuelan citizen. This denied poor communities, largely made up of citizens of indigenous and Afro-Venezuelan descent, access to the vote.

Poor and marginalized communities were further discriminated against as a result of the location and distribution of voting centers around the country. In cities these centers were found exclusively in middle class neighborhoods. Voting centers located near poor neighborhoods had a much higher number of voters assigned to them than other centers. The result was that poor Venezuelans faced significantly longer lines on voting day. In rural areas, meanwhile, many small communities had no voting centers at all, and prospective voters would have to travel to larger towns, often dozens of miles away. Whether in rural or urban regions, poor Venezuelans often had to deal with significant material obstacles in order to exercise their right to vote.

As widespread civil unrest began to grip the nation in the late 1980's, AD and COPEI were compelled to begin the process of reforming Venezuela's political and electoral system. To start, it was decided in 1989 that state governors would no longer be Presidentially-appointed but would have to be directly elected by the people in open elections. A decade later, an electoral law known as the Organic Law of Suffrage and Political Participation was passed mandating the use of a new automated voting system. This electronic voting system was designed to address "acta mata voto" by making the tallying process more transparent and accountable. A new elections board, less beholden to the Punto Fijo hierarchy, was selected in 1998, just months before the Presidential election in which Hugo Chávez came to power.

AD and COPEI hoped that these measures would improve public perception toward them and their running of the electoral system. In the 1998 legislative and presidential elections they also mandated citizen participation. 300,000 registered voters were drafted through a lottery system to serve as poll workers replacing party members who had previously been responsible for managing voting centers. Under this initiative party members could only participate in the tallying process if there was a lack of lottery selected poll workers. International voting experts like the Carter Center, were also asked to observe.

The Chávez Era is Ushered In (1999-present)

On December 6, 1998 as electoral reforms were being instituted across the country, Hugo Chávez won Venezuela's presidential elections and ushered in a new political era for Venezuela. The final tally showed that Chávez had won 56 percent of the vote. One of the priorities for the political coalition that brought Chávez to power was to deepen the process of electoral reform. Soon after Chávez began his first term in 1999, the new Administration and the National Assembly moved to strengthen previous reforms and initiate new ones with a focus on voter access and rights, security, and safeguards against fraud.

Mision Identidad

One of the first and most successful initiatives to date is known as Mission Identity, or *Mision Identidad* in Spanish. Initiated in October 2003, and carried out with the help of the National Office of Identification and Immigration (ONIDEX), Mission Identity aims to implement article 56 of the 1999 Constitution which states:

All persons have the right to be registered free of charge with the Civil Registry Office after birth, and to obtain public documents constituting evidence of their biological identity, in accordance with law.⁴

Essentially a massive citizenship and get out the vote campaign, Mission Identity has given millions of Venezuelans national ID cards granting them full citizenship and the rights that come with it. Historically marginalized communities were particularly targeted through the use of 84 regional ONIDEX offices and 7 mobile units allowing them to reach the most remote areas of the country. Once equipped with ID cards, citizens were offered the opportunity to register to vote and benefit from state subsidized services like education, housing, and health care.

During the first phase of the program implemented in 2003 and 2004, over eight million people received either new ID cards or updated their old ones. From the beginning of 2005 to July 2006 Mission Identity served an additional 10 million Venezuelans. In addition, over 5 and a half million Venezuelans registered to vote for the first time and over 600,000 immigrants who met the conditions for naturalization were granted Venezuelan citizenship.⁵ Currently more than half of the Venezuelan population is registered to vote and many more have been granted the rights and benefits of citizenship.

A New and Independent CNE

Another important reform initiated by the Chávez administration and the 1999 Constitutional Assembly was the creation of an independent, non-partisan body to oversee elections. Mandated by the 1999 constitution, the CNE became a separate branch of government, parallel to the executive, legislative and judicial branches. To ensure that the body was not politicized, universities and civil society organizations would now participate in the process of nominating directors. To date this new process has produced one of the most technically competent boards ever. The current President, for example, has more than ten years of experience in electoral issues and is a recognized expert in issues of voter access.

Instituting Voter Security and Transparency

Venezuela's 1998 Organic Law of Suffrage and Political Participation, passed before President Chávez took office, recognized that one of the nation's major problems was fraud and required that elections be conducted with electronic voting machines. In recent years, the newly reformed CNE has worked to make this a reality. The machines are meant to standardize the way Venezuelans voted around the country and provide a faster and more accurate vote count than manual methods. Shortly after President Chávez became president, however, opposition parties suggested that the machines, which have been used in various Venezuelan elections since the year 2000, could be used to violate voter privacy and commit fraud electronically. But even some of the Venezuelan government's harshest critics have noted that the paper and electronic trail produced by the machines guarantees Venezuelans a greater degree of security in their electoral process than many citizens of the United States. Florida Senator Bill Nelson, in a recent hearing on Venezuela, remarked that "the State of Florida is not even doing that with a paper trail. So maybe Venezuela will teach Florida something."⁶

⁴ Article 56, Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

⁵ Venezuelan Missions web page, <http://www.misionvenezuela.gov.ve/11Identidad/11Derechoexistir.htm> La Misión

⁶ Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere. Hearing on Venezuela, June 24, 2004.

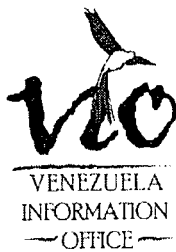
The new CNE also invested in a unique technology to ensure that no party could manipulate the computers in order to affect the outcome of the vote. The source code necessary to access the machines is split into four equal parts, which are then divided among stakeholders, including a representative from the CNE, opposition parties, pro-government coalitions and international observers. In order for *any* change to the coding of the computers to be implemented and enable fraudulent action, each of these parties must be present and access the machines simultaneously. For legitimate purposes, such as testing the machines and auditing the vote, each party has access to the computers, but any unauthorized tampering is rendered impossible. Just before the 2004 referendum, officials from the Carter Center received a full presentation of the machines, and stated that they were “very impressed with the presentation that we received, the security measures that were shown to us, and the functioning of the machine that we witnessed.” Since 1998 international organizations and Venezuelan citizens alike have been invited to monitor the elections. To aid in this process beginning in 2000 the CNE improved the electronic voting system by making it possible to fully audit the computer software used as well as each step of the electronic voting process. Thanks to these mechanisms, every aspect of the Venezuelan voting system has been thoroughly audited by international election observers. The Carter Center, European Union, Organization of American States and others have repeatedly observed Venezuela’s elections and overwhelmingly certified that they are free and fair and uphold the voter’s right to privacy.⁷ In fact this year, under an agreement between the CNE and participating political parties, a full 55% of the paper receipts will be audited after the presidential vote to ensure that their numbers match the electronic vote tallied.

Democratizing the Voting Centers

In the last few years, the CNE has worked intensely to guarantee that all citizens can participate in elections with relative ease by increasing the number of voting centers throughout the country, with a focus on low income urban and rural communities. According to official figures provided by the CNE, since mid 2004 the number of voting centers has increased at a steady rate. At the time of the August 2004 Referendum there were 8,279 voting centers in Venezuela. By December 2005, when the last legislative elections were held, the number of centers had reached 9,271. Before the upcoming elections in December, the CNE expects to have 10,500 voting centers up and running. The geographical distribution of these new centers has been planned to ensure that similar numbers of voters are served at each center, roughly 3,500 voters per center.⁸ Also, over the last two years the CNE has more than doubled the amount of voting booths throughout Venezuela so as to avoid long waits outside voting centers. The total number of booths has increased from 12,213 in August of 2004 to 27,366 at the present date.

⁷ The final “Report of the Electoral Observer Mission of the Organization of American States in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela’s 2005 Parliamentary Elections”. <http://oas.org/main/main.asp?slang=S&slink=http://www.oas.org/documents/spa/memberstates.asp>

⁸ “PODER ELECTORAL, DEMOCRATIZA DISTRIBUCIÓN DE CENTROS DE VOTACIÓN EN TODO EL PAÍS.” CNE Press Release, February 24, 2006. <http://www.cne.gob.ve/noticiaDetallada.php?id=3622>



Venezuela Information Office
2000 P Street, NW Suite 240
Washington, DC 20036
Voice: (202) 347-8081
Fax: (202) 347-8091

VENEZUELA'S ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES

Ever since President Hugo Chávez's landslide victory in the August 2004 referendum, sectors of Venezuela's opposition and private media have sought to cast doubt upon the fairness and transparency of the country's electronic voting system. It has been suggested that the machines, which have been used in various Venezuelan elections since the year 2000, could be used to violate voter privacy and commit fraud. However, a careful look at how Venezuela's electoral system actually functions shows that these claims are without substance and that elections in Venezuela are now among the fairest and most secure in the world. Even some of the Venezuelan government's harshest critics have noted that the paper and electronic trail produced by the machines guarantees Venezuelans a greater degree of security in their electoral process than many citizens of the United States. For instance, Florida Senator Bill Nelson, in a recent hearing on Venezuela, remarked that "the State of Florida is not even doing that with a paper trail. So maybe Venezuela will teach Florida something."¹

WHY ELECTRONIC MACHINES?

Venezuela's 1998 Organic Law of Suffrage and Political Participation, passed before President Chavez took office, requires that elections be conducted with electronic voting machines. The law was part of a larger effort to reduce the possibility of fraud through ballot-box stuffing that was prevalent throughout generations of Venezuelan elections. The machines standardize the way Venezuelans vote around the country, and the electronic tallies provide a faster and more accurate vote count than manual methods. The touch-screen machines are easy to use, and have the potential to greatly reduce the time voters spend inside the voting center.

Since the year 2000 the National Electoral Council (or CNE by its Spanish acronym) has progressively perfected the electronic voting system by, for example, making it possible to fully audit the computer software that is used as well as each step of the electronic voting process. Thanks to these mechanisms, every aspect of the Venezuelan voting system has been thoroughly audited by electoral observers from Venezuela and from international organizations like the Organization of American States and the European Union.

HOW THE MACHINES WORK

The SmartMatic technology utilizes a simple, touch-screen system. The voter selects his preferred candidate by touching the box with his candidate's name and the associated party logo. Once the selection is made, a screen will appear, again displaying the candidate's name and requesting the voter to confirm his selection. Once confirmed, the machine prints a paper receipt, which the voter may check for accuracy before depositing it in a locked ballot box. Under an agreement between the CNE and participating political parties, a full 55% of the paper receipts will be audited after the presidential vote to ensure that their numbers match the electronic vote tallied.

The electronic data is encrypted and sent to the National Counting Center for a nearly instantaneous vote tally. The official vote count is announced after the paper audit has taken place.

The process outlined above was utilized in the 2005 National Assembly elections, which were observed and approved by international observers from the Organization of American States (OAS) and the European

¹ Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Hearing on Venezuela, June 24, 2004.

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Union. In its final report on the 2005 elections, the OAS noted that voter privacy was respected and that all Venezuelan's right to a secret ballot was upheld.²

PROTECTIONS AGAINST FRAUD

Venezuelan elections authorities have invested in a unique technology to ensure that no party can manipulate the computers in order to affect the outcome of the vote. The source code necessary to access the machines is split into four equal parts, which are then divided among stakeholders, including a representative from the CNE, opposition parties, pro-government coalitions and international observers. In order for *any* change to the coding of the computers to be implemented, each of these parties must be present and access the machines simultaneously. For legitimate purposes, such as testing the machines and auditing the vote, each party will have access to the computers, but any unauthorized tampering is rendered impossible.

Just before the 2004 referendum, officials from the Carter Center received a full presentation of the Smartmatic machines, and stated that they were "very impressed with the presentation that we received, the security measures that were shown to us, and the functioning of the machine that we witnessed."³

THUMBPRINT MACHINES

Venezuela has enlisted a separate technology to ensure that voters do not cast multiple ballots at different polling stations. Computers at the entrance of polling stations record the thumbprints of each voter as they enter. The thumbprints are stored in a centralized database, and observers are automatically notified if a voter has previously cast a ballot at another polling station. The thumbprint machines are separate from the electronic voting stations, so that the database records only *who* has participated in the election, not *how* an individual casts his vote.

OWNERSHIP OF SMARTMATIC

The Boca Raton, Florida based SmartMatic Company designed and manufactured the machines used in Venezuela's elections. Over the last two years, opposition leaders have attempted to make the machines a source of controversy by claiming that the Venezuelan government may secretly control the company. But according to a recent investigation by the *Miami Herald*, the Venezuelan nationals who own SmartMatic, Antonio Mugica Rivero and Alfredo Anzola Jaumotte, have strong ties to Venezuela's opposition. As the *Herald* reports, "Anzola's father, Alfredo Anzola Mendez, was a prominent opposition member and a columnist in the anti-Chavez Caracas newspaper *Tal Cual*. 'I'm anti-Chavez by conviction,' he said in a 2004 interview at his home in an exclusive Caracas neighborhood."

CONCLUSION

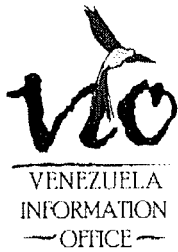
Venezuela's elections are among the most closely scrutinized in the world, and its electronic voting apparatus among the most sophisticated, accurate and transparent in any major democracy. As the December 3rd elections draw near and polls continue to show that a majority of Venezuelans intend to reelect President Chavez⁴, opposition voices have already begun reciting what the *Miami Herald* describes as "nursery rhyme accusations"⁵ on the elections process. As world attention is drawn to Venezuela's elections, it is important to understand the basic facts regarding how the electronic voting machines function and note, like Senator Bill Nelson, that Florida and other parts of the world may have a an opportunity to learn from Venezuela's modern and transparent voting process.

² The final *Report of the Electoral Observer Mission in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's 2005 Parliamentary Elections*

³ "Electronic Touch-Screens Tested For Venezuela Recall Vote," Associated Press, July 18, 2004.

⁴ "Chávez Dominates Venezuelan Campaign," Angus Reid Global Scan: Polls & Research., July 16, 2006 <http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/index.cfm/fuseaction/viewItem/itemID/12548>

⁵ Gunson, Phil and Steven Dudley, "2 Million Voters, 1 Address? More Fraud claims Mar Venezuelan Election." *Miami Herald*, July 20, 2006 <http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/world/americas/15078199.htm>



Venezuela Information Office
2000 P Street NW Suite 240
Washington, DC 20036
Voice: (202) 347-8081
Fax: (202) 347-8091

Venezuela's 2006 Presidential Elections: Opposition Concerns and Tactics

Last November, the Organization of American States brokered an important set of compromises between Venezuela's election authorities and a coalition of major opposition parties. After days of negotiations, and just one week before Venezuela's scheduled legislative elections, the National Electoral Council (or CNE under its Spanish acronym) agreed to a list of significant concessions with the agreement that the opposition would participate fully in the elections. At a joint press conference on November 28th, OAS officials confirmed that all parties "committed themselves to participating in the elections and encouraging citizens to vote."

Despite this commitment, just a few days later each of Venezuela's major opposition parties announced, in turn, that they would boycott the elections.

While the elections went ahead as planned, the boycott ensured that president Chavez' allies won virtually every seat in the legislature. Observers from around the world were stunned. A spokesman from the conservative American Enterprise Institute told the Chicago Tribune that the boycott was a "terrible mistake,"¹ and the OAS electoral observation mission expressed its "concern that due to the withdrawal of the opposition, an important portion of the citizenry is left without representation in the National Assembly." "Every democracy," the report went on to say, "requires an institutional opposition committed to the electoral process, so that it can loyally participate in the democratic system."²

As Venezuela moves toward presidential elections on December 3, opposition parties remain publicly divided on their strategy. One major party, *Acción Democrática*, which lost 23 legislative seats in last year's boycott, is once again encouraging its members to abstain from voting. The other major opposition parties have united behind one candidate, Manuel Rosales, the governor of Venezuela's oil-rich state of Zulia. At this point, they are publicly encouraging participation but, as past experience indicates, this could change at any time.

In the months ahead, opposition leaders will debate their election day strategy. In the meantime, it is important that all Venezuela election watchers have an understanding of their concerns and potential tactics.

National Electoral Council (CNE)

Under Venezuelan law, the National Electoral Council (or CNE under its Spanish acronym) is a wholly separate branch of government, isolated from political control by the executive branch. Yet many in the opposition accuse the CNE board of being controlled by President Chavez, and say that its decisions cannot

¹ Marx, Gary, "4 Opposition Parties Boycott Venezuela Vote," Chicago Tribune, December 1, 2005.
<http://www.rethinkvenezuela.com/news/12-01-05ct.html>

² "Preliminary OAS Observations on the Legislative Elections in Venezuela," Organization of American States Press Release, December 6, 2006. http://www.oas.org/oaspage/press_releases/press_release.asp?sCodigo=EOM-VE-04

be objective. Opposition leaders often claim that under the CNE, the Venezuelan vote will not be fair. Many media outlets have repeated the opposition claims, further contributing to a climate of general mistrust of the electoral system among opposition voters.

But these claims don't stand up to real scrutiny. To begin with, the CNE Board of Directors is appointed by the National Assembly, unlike in many countries where the executive branch has primary authority. What's more, the process by which the CNE directors are selected is both rigorous and highly democratic. Under the rules established in Venezuela's Constitution, as well as the 2002 Organic Law of Electoral Powers, the National Assembly must first establish a Nominations Commission, made up of elected officials and representatives of civil society, which registers nominees to the CNE Board from the public. The nominations come from a variety of sources, including universities, non-profit organizations and a state council, whose members are themselves appointed by the People's Ombudsman, the Attorney General's Office and the Comptroller General of the Republic.

In order to be considered, nominees for the CNE board must meet a set of selection criteria, which, among other things, prohibits them from belonging to political organizations and favors candidates that have experience in the electoral field. At the end of the selection process, the National Assembly is presented with a list of five nominees for the five Director positions on the CNE Board: three of these are nominations made by civil society organizations, one is a nominee from the law faculties of Venezuela's universities and the fifth is a nomination made by the state council. The Commission then publishes the names of the nominees in the national media and allows one week for the general public to scrutinize the choices made and double-check that they meet the selection criteria. Finally, the National Assembly must approve the nominations by a 2/3 vote.

Needless to say, this elaborate selection process, in which civil society sectors nominate the majority of the members of the CNE board, is unprecedented in Venezuela and in much of the rest of the world. Thanks to this process, the current CNE Board is made up, in its majority, of professionals with both a high level of competence in the electoral field and with strong ties to civil society. It's worth noting, for instance, that the current President of the CNE, Tibisay Lucena, is the first woman to preside over Venezuela's electoral authority and was originally nominated by a grassroots women's organization, the *Circulo Feminino Popular*.

In addition to the independence of the CNE board, there are a number of additional checks and balances in place to ensure a fair vote. Venezuelan elections are among the most heavily monitored in the world. This December, the Carter Center and the Organization of American States will send hundreds of observers to oversee the vote. Indeed, independent observers have already been participating in pre-election monitoring, including audits of the voter registries and electronic voting machines.

For its part, the CNE has listened to, and met, many demands by the opposition. Before last year's legislative elections, the CNE agreed to scrap the use of electronic fingerprint scanners at the request of opposition parties. This year, electoral authorities agreed to bend Venezuela's election rules, to the consternation of many Chavez supporters, in order to allow Governor Manuel Rosales to run for president without having to resign his office as governor. Perhaps most importantly, the CNE has agreed to a manual audit of a full 53 to 55% percent of the vote, which will be overseen by international observers and political parties alike.

Electronic Voting Machines

Ever since the 2004 recall referendum, sectors of Venezuela's opposition and private media have sought to cast doubt on the fairness and transparency of the country's electronic voting system. It has been suggested that the machines could be used to violate voter privacy or otherwise commit fraud. Immediately following

the referendum tally, which had Chavez winning with 60% of the vote, nearly all opposition parties cried foul, and quickly released statistical studies alleging that the vote was rigged. These hasty reports, produced by statisticians with close links to the opposition, were quickly debunked by the Carter Center, who enlisted an independent panel of statisticians to study the allegations, and found major flaws in their analysis³. While opposition leaders have stopped discussing the idea of electronic fraud, rank and file opposition activists have kept the notion alive, particularly on the internet.

Electronic voting is a requirement under Venezuela's Organic Law of Suffrage and Political Participation, which was passed in 1998 before President Chavez took office. The law was part of a larger effort to reduce the possibility of fraud through ballot-box stuffing that was prevalent throughout generations of Venezuelan elections. The machines standardize the way Venezuelans vote around the country, and the electronic tallies provide a faster and more accurate vote count than manual methods. The touch-screen machines are easy to use, and have the potential to greatly reduce the time voters spend inside the voting center. More importantly, the machines print paper receipts after each vote, which ensures that the voter can check to be sure that the vote recorded matched his intent, and also allows for a manual recount if necessary.

The CNE has also invested in a unique technology to ensure that no party can manipulate the computers to affect the outcome of the vote. The source code necessary to access the machines is split into four equal parts, which are then divided among stakeholders, including a representative from the CNE, opposition parties, pro-government coalitions and international observers. In order for any change to the coding of the computers to be implemented, each of these parties must be present and access the machines simultaneously. For legitimate purposes, such as testing the machines and auditing the vote, each party will have access to the computers, but any unauthorized tampering is rendered impossible. The machines are open to inspection by international observers and Venezuelan political parties alike.

For more information on electronic voting machines in Venezuela, please visit <http://www.rethinkvenezuela.com/downloads/electricvote.htm>

Fingerprint Identification Machines

Separate from the electronic voting machines, but equally controversial among Venezuela's opposition, is a technology that identifies voters by scanning their fingerprints into a computer database as they enter the voting center. The intent is to ensure that voters do not cast multiple ballots at different polling stations, a practice that frequently occurred in the past.

Although the fingerprint machines are separate from the computers on which Venezuelans cast their vote, opposition leaders have expressed concern that the machines could be used to identify how a person votes. Before last December's legislative elections, technicians working for opposition parties demonstrated to international observers that the voting machines stored the order of each vote. If the order of the votes cast, they argued, was matched to the order that people entered the voting center, using the data from fingerprint machines, elections officials could theoretically violate the privacy of the voting booth. CNE officials noted that even if only one fingerprint scanner were used for each voting center, there would still be multiple voting machines to match them to, which would render such a scheme impossible. Still, the CNE agreed to drop the use of the fingerprint scanners in order to shore up opposition confidence in last year's vote. They will, however, likely be in use for the Presidential elections.

Voter Registry

³ "Carter Center Statement about Statistical Assessment of the Venezuela Referendum Results," September 5, 2004. <http://www.cartercenter.org/doc1821.htm>

Another object of opposition ire is the voter registry. Historically, Venezuela's voter registry has been poorly maintained. In part, this is due to the conditions of poverty. For example, those who live in makeshift houses in Venezuela's vast shantytowns have no official address, and may register at the address of a relative or even a local community center. This can result in dozens of voters registered under the same address. In other cases, sloppy maintenance at the local level has meant that thousands of voters have remained on the rolls long after an individual has died.

What's more, a nationwide program, known as "Mission Identity," was implemented by the government to provide traditionally marginalized Venezuelans with identification cards and the opportunity to register to vote. In a period of less than one year, mission identity added more than two million citizens to the electoral registry. Opposition leaders have cried foul on the entire premise of the program, calling it a cynical attempt to get more pro-Chavez voters into the registry, and arguing, without evidence, that people have been registered multiple times.

In the past, opposition groups have argued that the registry had a very small error rate—a point which probably wasn't accurate. However, after Mission Identity, they have called the entire registry into question. One group, Sumate, demanded that the CNE publish the entire national voter list so that they could audit it themselves. Citing voter privacy, the CNE has to do so, but instead enlisted the help of an independent Latin American elections advisory group, known as CAPEL, to audit the registry.

In addition, a separate independent audit conducted by three major Caracas Universities (Universidad Central de Venezuela, Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, and Simón Bolívar University) found that while there are still problems with the registry, there has been no effort by Venezuelan authorities to manipulate the registry in any way.⁴ This finding was significant considering that the audit was commissioned by the three front-running opposition candidates at the time, Manuel Rosales, Julio Borges, and Teodoro Petkoff.

Poll Results

Of course, many Chavistas argue that the above complaints are nothing more than a cover for the opposition's true intention: to avoid a humiliating defeat at the ballot box. Opinion polls before the last year's legislative elections indicated that opposition parties would lose ground in the National Assembly. The opposition probably likely considered that a boycott would de-legitimize the Assembly as a body, and also shore up support in international circles. They correctly reasoned that a boycott would lead to a high abstention rate, as even Chavistas would be less likely to vote if their candidates ran unopposed.

The same conditions exist in the Presidential race. Currently, President Chavez enjoys the support of between 55 and 60 percent of likely voters. The opposition has approximately 20 to 25 percent support. The rest of those polled remain undecided or say they will abstain.

It is interesting to note that the first party to declare its boycott of last year's vote was *Acción Democrática*, a party that had the most to lose from not participating. Long before they announced their boycott last winter, however, most AD candidates simply stopped campaigning altogether: not a single flyer or poster or ad was run in support of their 23 legislative seats. This fact gives credence to the suspicion that AD, at least, never intended to participate in the elections at all. Significantly, AD's Secretary General, Henry Ramos Allup, has already stated that the party will not participate in this year's presidential elections. However, it should be noted that AD is divided internally over this strategy as at least two important former National Assembly

⁴ "Coordinador de estudios sobre el Registro Electoral de las universidades Católica, UCV y Simón Bolívar dice que no hay nada que sugiera fraude," Globovision, July 19, 2006. <http://www.globovision.com/news.php?nid=33310>

members have publicly announced that they are in favor of participating in elections and have complained that there was no consultation of party rank and file before the abstention decision was announced.

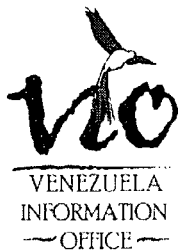
A Look at December

With the agreement of most major opposition parties on one unified candidate, Manuel Rosales, it now looks as if at least some of Venezuela's anti-Chavez factions are considering seeing this election through.

Unfortunately, if last year's legislative elections are any indication, they could pull out at any time up to the date of the election.

The CNE has been scrambling to ensure that voter confidence reaches an acceptable level, but with influential parties like *Acción Democrática* publicly promoting abstention, it is going to be an uphill battle. The CNE, along with international observers, will be working to communicate the improvements in the voter registry and the safeguards in the electronic voting apparatus to shore up public support, but in the end it will be the decisions made by opposition parties that will shape their role in Venezuela's political life. If polls continue to show that an opposition victory is impossible, leaders may decide once again to pull out to save face.

But a repeat of last year's boycott would do more than just undermine the legitimacy of President Chavez. It could very well alienate the United States government, which has long promoted and funded Venezuela's opposition movements. It also risks undermining the faith of Venezuelans, and could leave those opposed to Chavez without a political voice. As a long-term strategy, that benefits no one.



Venezuela Information Office
2000 P Street, NW Suite 240
Washington, DC 20036
Voice: (202) 347-8081
Fax: (202) 347-8091

Mission Identity

Granting the rights of citizenship to all Venezuelans

The Need for Voter Empowerment and Reform

In 1998 less than half of all voting age Venezuelans were registered to vote. During the previous forty years, in which two parties, AD and COPEI, dominated the political scene through a power-sharing agreement, the government was rarely compelled to take measures that would empower the country's poor majority.¹ Rather, exercising one's democratic rights as a citizen was largely left to Venezuela's upper and middle classes.

For the vast majority of the population who lived in poverty, voting was seen as an inaccessible privilege and not an inalienable right. First of all, many low income Venezuelans did not possess national identification cards, a prerequisite for registering to vote. Government officials rarely provided birth certificates to poor Venezuelans who were not born in hospitals or private clinics, making it more difficult later in life to receive official documentation. Second, urban voting centers were primarily located in middle- and upper-class neighborhoods, while in rural areas they were inaccessible to most of those who couldn't afford transportation. In both instances, the inhabitants of poor communities, often comprised of citizens of Indigenous and Afro-Venezuelan descent, were often discouraged from voting due to the sheer difficulty and cost of traveling to the nearest voting centers.

In the late 1980's and 1990's the misery and disenfranchisement felt by Venezuela's impoverished majority reached a boiling point. Civil unrest, including frequent and widespread protests, gripped the nation, leading the government to declare martial law twice. During this period the two dominant political parties, Democratic Action (AD) and the Social Christian Party (COPEI) were forced to make minor reforms to Venezuela's electoral system, including the instatement of election monitors, the use of automated voting machines and the appointment of an entirely new body responsible for carrying out elections.² However, not until Hugo Chavez's governing coalition came to power in 1998 were significant measures taken to guarantee that all sectors of Venezuelan society could exercise their right to vote.

Mission Identity

With Chavez' landslide victory in 1998 a new political era was ushered in. One of the major issues that the new administration promised to address was electoral fraud and exclusion. When his term

¹ McCoy, Jennifer "Chavez and the End of "Partyarchy" in Venezuela" *Journal of Democracy* - Volume 10, Number 3, July 1999, pp. 64-77 [The Johns Hopkins University Press](#)

² *ibid.*

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began in 1999 the new administration and the National Assembly moved quickly to strengthen earlier reforms and initiate new ones with a focus on voter access and rights, security, and fraud.

One of the first and most successful initiatives to date has been Mission Identity, or *Mision Identidad* in Spanish. Established in October 2003 and carried out with the help of the National Office of Identification and Immigration (ONIDEX), Mission Identity aims to implement article 56 of the Venezuelan Constitution, which states:

*All persons have the right to be registered free of charge with the Civil Registry Office after birth, and to obtain public documents constituting evidence of their biological identity, in accordance with law.*³

Essentially a massive citizenship and voter registration campaign rolled into one, Mission Identity has given millions of Venezuelans national ID cards, granting them, for the first time, the full rights of Venezuelan citizenship. This grassroots campaign has been carried out through the use of 84 regional ONIDEX offices and 7 mobile units, allowing officials to reach the most remote areas.⁴ In addition, the National Electoral Council has created a website allowing citizens to view the location of each ID center and find out what services will be provided there. As well, citizens may view personalized voter registration information by entering in their ID number.⁵

During the first phase of the program, from October 2003 through December 2004, over 8 million people received either new ID cards or updated old ones. Mission Identity served an additional 10 million Venezuelans between 2005 and the first half of 2006. In this period, more than 5 and a half million Venezuelans registered to vote for the first time in their lives.⁶

Mission Identity has concentrated its efforts on populations that have historically been overlooked, like immigrant workers and rural and indigenous communities. According to official figures provided by the Mission, during the second phase of the campaign, between October 31, 2005 and July 17, 2006 over 430,000 qualified immigrants were naturalized and almost 274,000 indigenous people were issued ID cards guaranteeing them their rights as equal members of society.



Since the campaign's inception in 2003, electoral participation has grown tremendously in presidential elections. In the 2000 elections, 11 million Venezuelans were registered to vote but only a little over half (6 million) actually did so. However, in the 2004 referendum, just one year after the project was launched, 14 million Venezuelans were registered to vote and 9 million exercised their right, dropping the abstention rate from 43.6% in 2000 to 30.1% in 2004.⁷ Thanks to this ongoing effort, as of May 2006, more than half of Venezuela's 26 million citizens were registered to vote and many more were officially recognized citizens.⁸

³ Article 56, Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

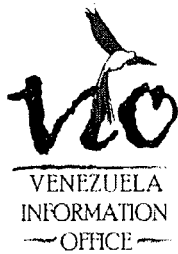
⁴ "Cedulacion: Identificar a Todos Los Venezolanos", <http://www.misionvenezuela.gov.ve/11Identidad/11Cedulacion.htm>

⁵ Venezuelan National Electoral web page, <http://cne.gob.ve/>

⁶ Mision Venezuela web page, <http://www.misionvenezuela.gov.ve/11Identidad/11Derechoexistir.htm>

⁷ Venezuelan National Electoral Council web page, <http://cne.gob.ve/>

⁸ Electoral Registry Audit, August 2006 http://cne.gob.ve/documentos/auditoria_definitiva.pdf



Venezuela Information Office
2000 P Street NW Suite 240
Washington, DC 20036
Voice: (202) 347-8081
Fax: (202) 347-8091

What International Observers Say About Venezuela's Elections

Venezuela's elections are among the most heavily scrutinized in the world. The legislative elections from December 2005 were observed by delegations from the European Union and the Organization of American States (OAS). The 2004 Recall Referendum was observed by a number of international bodies, including the OAS and the Carter Center. Below, in their own words, are statements from these observers on how Venezuela's elections are conducted, as well as their comments on Venezuela's opposition parties.

On Electronic Voting Machines:

"The Venezuelan voting system possesses a number of features that are in line with the most advanced international standards of e-voting. In certain aspects, such as the paper trail audit, the system developed in Venezuela is probably the most advanced system in the world to date."

**-European Union Election Observation Mission
March 2006¹**

"The security and transparency measures introduced in the automated voting process are in line with the most advanced international practice." Also, "The general conclusion of the observers was that the voting machines seemed very reliable."

**-European Union Election Observation Mission
March 2006²**

On 2005 Legislative Elections, and the Opposition's decision to boycott:

"We had a problem with the Venezuelan opposition, which assured us that they would not withdraw from the [electoral] process if certain conditions were met. These were met and despite this, they withdrew. This had an impact on the high abstention."

**-OAS General Secretary Jose Miguel Insulza
December 2005³**

Venezuelan elections officials "technically administered the process well," and "demonstrated a clear willingness to meet the demands of the opposition parties to increase confidence in the process."

**-European Union Election Observation Mission
March 2006⁴**

¹ "Final Report: Parliamentary Elections, Venezuela 2005," European Union Election Observation Mission, March 2006. http://www.eucomvenezuela.org/final_statement_en.pdf

² "Election Observation and Legitimacy of Venezuela's Parliamentary Elections," Venezuelanalysis.com, December 19, 2005. <http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/articles.php?artno=1633>

³ El Mercurio (Chile), December 25, 2006. <http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/news.php?newsno=1855>

“It is of concern that due to the withdrawal of the opposition, an important portion of the citizenry is left without representation in the National Assembly,” and “Every democracy requires an institutional opposition committed to the electoral process, so that it can loyally participate in the democratic system.”

**-Electoral Observation Mission of the Organization of American States
December 2005⁵**

On the 2004 Recall Referendum:

“The Carter Center concludes that the automated machines worked well and the voting results do reflect the will of the people.”

**-Carter Center Venezuela Referendum Observation Delegation
August 2004⁶**

“The unusually high turnout of 73 percent reflects the intense interest in this recall referendum. The Venezuelan people are to be commended for standing in line for hours without incidents, in this demonstration of civic participation and pride.” “We urge all Venezuelans to accept these results and look to the future.”

**-Carter Center Venezuela Referendum Observation Delegation
August 2004⁷**

⁴ “Final Report: Parliamentary Elections, Venezuela 2005,” European Union Election Observation Mission, March 2006.
http://www.eucomvenezuela.org/final_statement_en.pdf

⁵ “Preliminary OAS Observations on the Legislative Elections in Venezuela,” Organization of American States Press Release, December 6, 2006. http://www.oas.org/oaspage/press_releases/press_release.asp?sCodigo=EOM-VE-04

⁶ “Last Phase of the Venezuelan Recall Referendum” Carter Center Report, August 21, 2004.
<http://www.cartercenter.org/doc1807.htm>

⁷ “Last Phase of the Venezuelan Recall Referendum” Carter Center Report, August 21, 2004.
<http://www.cartercenter.org/doc1807.htm>

Venezuela: Latin America's Economic Success Story

A Growing Economy

Venezuela's economy is growing at a significant pace. In the first quarter of 2006 the economy grew sharply, even more than the 7.9% growth rate recorded during the same period last year. Preliminary estimates from the Central Bank of Venezuela show that the strongest growth is actually in the non-petroleum sector, particularly construction. In part this is due to an influx of government spending in housing and community development projects.

In 2005 Venezuela had the **highest GDP growth rate** in Latin America as its economy expanded 9.3%.

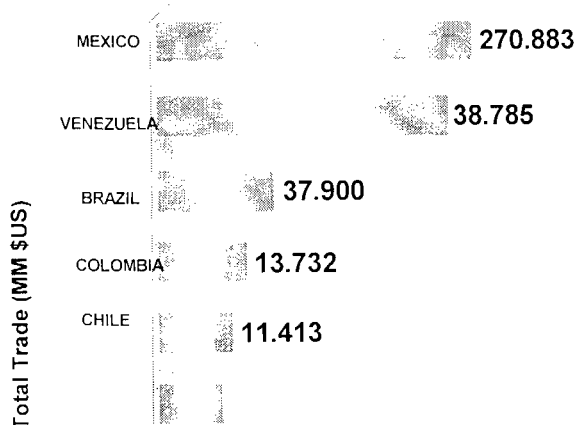
Trade

The United States International Trade Commission reported that in the last year **Venezuela has risen from the U.S.'s third trading partner in Latin America** (surpassing Brazil) **to its second** at the end of 2005, just below Mexico. Worldwide, Venezuela is the U.S.'s 13th trading partner.

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that Venezuela is the biggest holder of extra heavy/crude oil reserves in the world, even more than Saudi Arabia, and it's the only country with significant reserves in the western hemisphere. Considering that most of Venezuela's trade is in oil and

petroleum made products, this is of no small significance.

VENEZUELA IS 2ND US TRADING PARTNER
IN LATIN AMERICA-2005



Addressing Unemployment and Low Wages

The battle against unemployment continues to improve. Since the beginning of 2006 unemployment has been steadily falling from a high of 12.9% in January. Officials from the National Institute of Statistics predict that it could fall as low as 7% by the end of the year. In March unemployment fell to 10.1%, less than that of Washington, D.C.'s during the same time period.

The Venezuelan government recently announced plans to increase the minimum wage. In September the wage will be increased by 10% and will affect all public

and private sector employees. This follows annual 20-30% increases in the minimum wage since 2000.

Inflation

Venezuela's inflation rate fell to 0.6% this April, down from 0.9% in March. April's inflation rate brings inflation for the first trimester of the year to 2%, the lowest since 1988. In comparison to 2005 when the rate was recorded at 1.3% during April, Venezuela appears to be winning the battle against inflation. This is due in part to government instituted price controls on basic food staples, a measure aimed at protecting the majority poor population.

Impact on Society

From a recent poll in March 2006 taken by the opposition aligned polling firm Consultores 21, Venezuelans expressed their obvious social concerns directly related to the economy. Specifically they were asked to describe how much they thought President Chavez had improved or not improved employment, health, education, and housing, all important factors of economic growth.

Venezuelans reported that the Chavez administration had been very successful in the areas of:

Education (69.4%)

Housing (65.3%)

Health Care (65.2%)

Road Construction (56.3%)

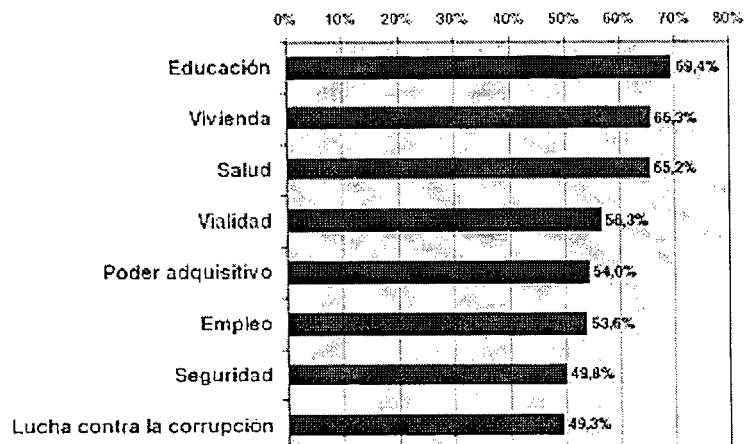
Purchasing Power (54.0%)

Employment (53.6%)

As is evident from the poll, government services and responsibilities traditionally carried out by the state are met with overwhelming satisfaction. Education, housing, and health care show the highest levels of perceived improvement, with employment following at a little over 50%.

Percepción de capacidad por áreas

¿El presidente Chávez es capaz de lograr que la situación en esa área esté como a usted le gustaría o no es capaz de hacerlo?
(Cifra graficada corresponde a "es capaz")



References:

Consultores 21 March 2006 Poll

<http://www.consultores21.com/index.html>

Venezuelan economy posts sharp IQ growth

http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D8H02AH05.htm?campaign_id=apn_home_down&chan=d

As Prices Surge Oil Giants Turn Sludge into Gold

http://online.wsj.com/article_print/SB114342461870208721.html

Venezuelan Central Bank

<http://www.bcv.org.ve/BLANKSITE/c4/notasprensa.asp?Codigo=4710&Operacion=2&Sec=False>

Inflation and Unemployment Fall, Minimum Wage Rises in Venezuela

<http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/news.php?newsno=1956>

La Cultura es el Pueblo: Venezuela's Investment in Culture and the Arts

Venezuela's social *misiones* are well known for their innovative approach to meeting the basic needs of citizens, including health care, job training and education. Less known, but equally important to Bolivarian philosophy, is the special focus Venezuela has placed on preserving its rich cultural history and promoting the arts among all sectors of Venezuelan society.

Under the Chavez administration, the Ministry of Culture has adopted the slogan *La Cultura es el Pueblo* (The Culture is the People), underscoring its renewed focus on regional folk traditions. In recent years, the Ministry has adopted a series of programs to document popular arts and crafts traditions and keep them alive in a modernizing world. The result has been a fast-growing awareness and pride in the distinct cultural traditions of all corners of the country. According to a 2005 survey conducted by the University of Chicago, Venezuelans today rank first in the world in their pride in their arts tradition.



Defining & Documenting Cultural Heritage

As globalization has increasingly eroded Venezuela's native cultural traditions, the Ministry of Culture has seen as its mission to both document and encourage country's unique local heritage. To begin, the Ministry established an innovative program, known as *Patrimonio Cultural* (Cultural Heritage), hosting forums in every region of the country for Venezuelans to define, at the community level, the aspects of local culture that are unique to their region and form a community identity. These traditions include all aspects of local culture, including music, dance,

handcrafts, recipes, architecture, poems, legends and products. These traditions have been documented, described and published in a book series on Venezuela's regional heritage, to be distributed to libraries and schools throughout the country.

Mision Cultura: Bringing Art to All Communities

Adapting the popular style of Venezuela's literacy missions, the Ministry of Culture has established *Mision Cultura*, which seeks to spread regional arts and crafts knowledge throughout the country. Troupes of volunteers, known as facilitators, are trained in the history and skills of regional arts, crafts and music. They then travel to far-ranging parts of the country, including inner cities and rural villages, teaching and sharing these traditions in free evening classrooms.

According to the Ministry, a full 315 of Venezuela's 335 incorporated cities have partnered with *Mision Cultura* on at least one project. Currently, more than 33,000 arts projects are underway nationwide.

The Venezuela Information Office is dedicated to informing the American public about contemporary Venezuela, and receives its funding from the government of Venezuela. Further information is available from the FARA office of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

Investment from the federal government has also allowed for the creation of a network of folk art galleries throughout the country, which provide a forum both for local master artisans to display their work, as well as space for touring exhibits featuring craftwork from around the country.

In the past, only city residents and the wealthy had access to these types of classes and galleries, often creating the impression that art is a vocation for an elite minority. The presence of art in local communities expands the knowledge and opportunities for millions more Venezuelans than ever before.

Rejuvenating the Music Industry

New telecommunications regulations have included provisions that encourage musicians to rediscover traditional music and encourage radio and television channels to promote national and independent productions. Modeled after similar regulations in Europe, Canada, and Brazil, the Law of Social Responsibility requires that fifty percent of the music played on Venezuelan radio stations be either produced or recorded by Venezuelan artists.

In addition, the law specifically provides incentives for musicians who focus on traditional folk styles. Twenty-five percent of all radio programming now incorporates elements of Venezuelan folklore, including native instruments or rhythms. This has resulted in a rejuvenation of the national recording industry, generating opportunities for musicians and technicians. It has also introduced entirely new musical genres, including “neo folklore” which combines traditional sounds with contemporary beats.

Today, Venezuelan radio stations rotate in such long-overlooked Venezuelan folk masters including Serenata Guayanesa, Ali Primera, and Cecilia Todd. What is more, the re-released catalogues of these past masters are topping the Venezuelan music charts as a new generation gains access to their sounds. In the past two years, fully one-third of Venezuelan music sales have come from Venezuelan artists.



Establishing a Film Industry

This summer, Venezuelan authorities announced an 11-million dollar investment to create a national film studio outside Caracas. The purpose of *La Villa del Cine* is to reinvigorate a flagging movie industry, create opportunities for local filmmakers, and combat the many negative images of Latinos present in films from Hollywood.

Currently, the Venezuelan film industry averages just one film completed every four years. The government expects that the complex will increase the number of Venezuelan films entering the international market, as well as allow for the purchase of independent films from abroad.

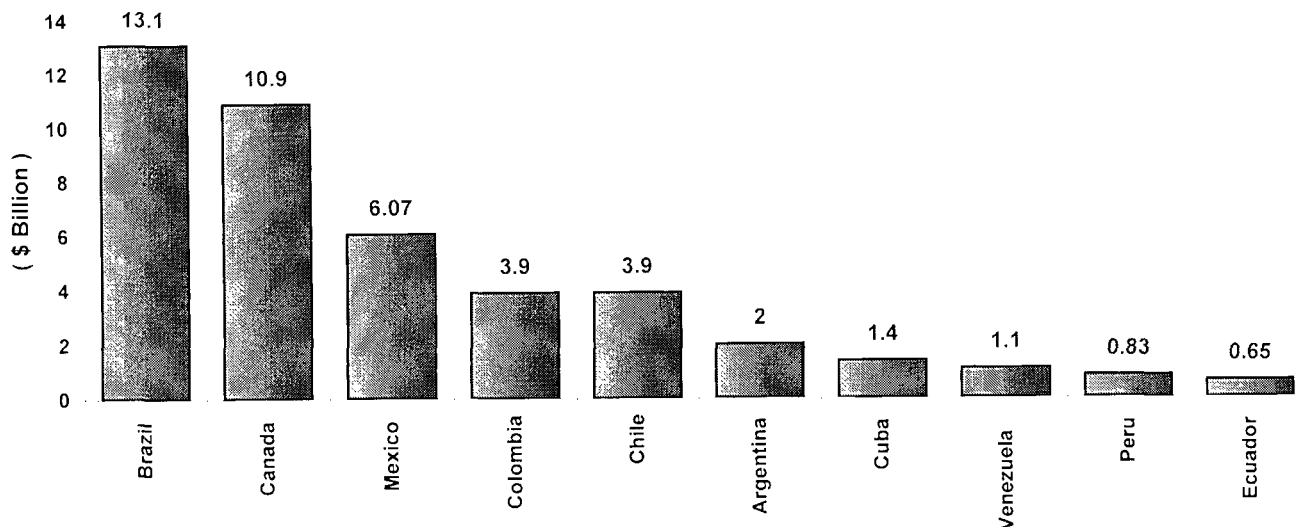
VENEZUELA'S DEFENSE SPENDING

Recently Venezuela has come under attack by the Bush administration for its new military equipment purchases. The State Department argues that Venezuela's military spending represents a threat to its neighbors, but the U.S. Government's own numbers show that many other Latin American nations spend far more on national defense with little or no objection from Washington.

Defense Spending in the Region

According to the Department of Defense, Venezuela's closest neighbors spend many times more each year on defense [see chart below]. Colombia's military expenditures are three and a half times higher, and Brazil's budget is a staggering 12 times larger.

NATIONAL DEFENSE SPENDING BY COUNTRY (2004 & 2005)¹



The difference is even more pronounced when these numbers are presented as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) [See figure below]. According to the World Bank, Venezuela's defense spending by GDP actually *decreased* yearly between 2001 and 2004. Only in 2005 did it slightly increase from 1.17% to 1.2% of GDP, according to the Central Intelligence Agency.²

¹ Sources: International Institute for Strategic Studies, U.S. Department of Defense. NOTE: the data from USA, Brasil, Canada, Colombia, Argentina, Cuba and Venezuela was taken from the Center for Arms Control 2004. The data from Chile, Perú y Ecuador are estimated by the CIA 2005. Unless otherwise noted, figures are for 2005. Expenditures are used in a few cases where official budgets are significantly lower than actual spending.

² CIO World Fact Book <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ve.html#Military>

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This resulted in \$1.61 billion in defense spending that same year. Other nations in the region have consistently increased their military spending as a function of GDP over the years. By this calculation, Venezuela currently ranks behind Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Bolivia, Uruguay, Brazil and Peru. The United States, of course, is by far the largest spender in the hemisphere, devoting nearly 4% of GDP to military spending. In pure dollar amounts, the U.S. military budget is more than 300 times larger than that of Venezuela.

What's more, Venezuela's big-ticket equipment purchases have consisted primarily of helicopters and transport aircraft, rather than weapons-carrying machinery.³ By way of contrast, Chile has recently purchased one hundred Leopard II combat tanks from Germany, two French-Spanish submarines with missile capabilities, ten F-16 fighter bombers with medium range air to air missiles from the United States and another batch of eighteen refurbished F-16 bombers.

U.S. Arms Embargo on Venezuela

But only Venezuela has been singled out by Washington with an arms embargo. This indicates that the restrictions are a result of Washington's political differences with Caracas rather than any concern for security. The embargo may impede Venezuela's ability to

DEFENSE SPENDING/ GDP RATIO

Source: World Development Indicators 2006 (World Bank)

Military expenditure (% of GDP)	2001	2002	2003	2004
Colombia	3.83	4.12	4.36	4.34
United States	3.1	3.42	3.78	3.98
Chile	3.71	3.81	3.44	3.86
Ecuador	1.83	2.3	2.36	1.95
Bolivia	1.7	1.72	1.64	1.61
Uruguay	1.77	1.66	1.57	1.39
Brazil	1.92	1.86	1.56	1.39
Peru	1.85	1.26	1.27	1.2
Venezuela, RB	1.75	1.46	1.35	1.17
Argentina	1.35	1.21	1.18	1.02
Paraguay	1.01	0.93	0.89	0.7
Honduras	0.65	0.83	0.76	0.68
El Salvador	0.79	0.76	0.71	0.66
Guatemala	0.69	0.56	0.48	0.4
Mexico	0.54	0.5	0.46	0.42

maintain its current equipment supplies and its ability to defend itself. Military analyst John Pike, quoted by the Associated Press, notes that over time the embargo could have serious repercussions because most of the country's planes are U.S.-made. The ban could "ground a significant fraction of their Air Force."⁴ This includes not only military planes but cargo and domestic carriers as well. And since the embargo includes a ban on spare parts and maintenance assistance Venezuela may be forced to overhaul their entire equipment supply in order to have a stock that can be repaired and maintained into the future.

The embargo was enacted May 15, 2006, after the State Department conducted what it called "a hard-eyed assessment" of Venezuela's "cooperation" with the United States in the war on terrorism. Department spokesman Sean McCormack suggested the decision came after the U.S. ruled that Venezuela was not doing enough to combat terrorism.⁵

³ "Latin America is Rearming" El Pais, <http://www.brazzilmag.com/content/view/full/6268/53/>

⁴ U.S. Orders Ban of Arms Sales to Venezuela, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/org/news/2006/060515-venezuela-arms.htm>

⁵ U.S. Ends Arms Sales to Venezuela, Citing Terrorism Fight
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/15/AR2006051500699.html>

The ruling, however, overlooks recent actions by the Venezuelan government to work with Colombian and U.S. officials to reduce narco-trafficking and reign in alleged terrorist leaders in the region. Such cooperation has led to the arrest of high-level Colombian rebel leaders and major international drug busts. In addition, Venezuela has increased border patrols along the Colombian border to both reduce the amount of narcotics passing through Venezuela's borders as well as to ensure the capture and return of Colombian rebels illegally hiding in Venezuelan territory.

Even Venezuela's opposition-dominated press has reluctantly acknowledged President Chavez' actions to improve cooperation. Last year *El Universal* reported on the Venezuelan government's instrumental role in the capture and return of FARC rebel leader Gentil Alvis Patino to Colombia. In the article, Colombian President Alvaro Uribe was quoted saying, "I wish to give President Chavez my thanks publicly as a champion in this effort..."⁶ In May 2006 Uribe again praised Chavez for his help in the peace process with another rebel group, the ELN.⁷ Nevertheless, Thomas Shannon, head of Western Hemisphere Affairs at the State Department continues to claim that Venezuela is not "cooperating in counter-terrorism activities in any meaningful way."⁸

International Pressure

The United States has gone far beyond merely banning sales of its own equipment to Venezuela. Recently there have been efforts to block the sale of Spanish patrol boats and Brazilian jets to Venezuela, even though most of this equipment was to be used to further increase drug patrols and counter-narcotics missions. The move puts Venezuela in a catch-22 position, as the embargo impedes Venezuela's ability to combat terrorism and narcotics along its border.

Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos and Defense Minister Jose Bono expressed frustration with the United States' attempt to characterize the Spanish purchases as "arms." Foreign Minister Moratinos told Agence France Presse, "I explained to Secretary of State Rice what has been called this so-called sale of arms. It has not been a sale of arms. It has been a sale of military equipment, that means planes, transport planes, patrol boats." Furthermore, Moratinos underscored that the deal involved "no military offensive equipment".⁹ And on November 28, 2005 the Associated Press reported that Defense Minister Bono said "neither the boats nor transport planes were armed and the patrol planes were only equipped for self-defense. 'This is not a warplane.'"¹⁰

Despite this knowledge the State Department continues to claim that Venezuela's recent equipment purchases "could contribute" to destabilization in the region, and may further jeopardize Venezuela's efforts to combat drug trafficking and defend its borders.

⁶ "Admiten Complot de Oficiales Colombianos y Exiliados del H.A." EL UNIVERSAL, 18 December, 2005.

http://www.eluniversal.com/2005/12/18/pol_art_18116B.shtml

⁷ ELN Chief Protected in Venezuela

http://english.eluniversal.com/2006/05/15/en_pol_art_15A707789.shtml

El Universal, May 15, 2006.

⁸ U.S. Orders Ban of Arms Sales to Venezuela, Associated Press, May 15, 2006.

⁹ Spanish FM in US Explains Military Equipment Sale To Venezuela, Agence France Presse, Washington, 15 April, 2004

¹⁰ <http://www.wtopnews.com/index.php?id=389&sid=633316>

¹¹ Sources: International Institute for Strategic Studies, U.S. Department of Defense. NOTE: the data from USA, Brasil, Canada, Colombia, Argentina, Cuba and Venezuela was taken from the Center for Arms Control 2004. The data from Chile, Perú y Ecuador are estimated by the CIA 2005. Unless otherwise noted, figures are for 2005. Expenditures are used in a few cases where official budgets are significantly lower than actual spending.

Venezuela's Efforts Against Drugs and Terrorism

Campaign Against Venezuela

On May 15, 2006, the U.S. State Department decided to restrict the sale of weapons to Venezuela. After conducting what they called "a hard-eyed assessment of whether or not a country is fully cooperating with the United States in fighting terrorism," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said they made the decision to impose an arms "restriction."

The ruling, however, overlooks recent actions by the Venezuelan government to work with Colombian and U.S. officials to reduce narco-trafficking and reign in alleged terrorist leaders in the region. Such cooperation has led to high level members of the FARC being captured in Venezuelan territory and turned over to Colombia, as well as major international drug busts.

Drugs and Terrorism

Venezuela has been cooperating with Colombia and the United States to combat narco-trafficking and terrorism in South America. Most notably this has been done through Venezuela's increase in border patrols at the Colombian border. The objective has been two-fold: to reduce the amount of narcotics passing through Venezuela's borders as well as to ensure the capture and return of Colombian rebels who try to illegally cross the Venezuelan territory.

On May 15, 2006, 2006 President Uribe praised Chavez for his help in facilitating the peace process in Colombia:

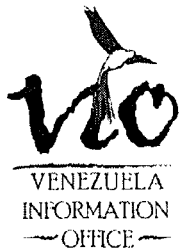
Uribe also replied today to the praises that Chavez gave him from London and assured that the government of Caracas has greatly facilitated the peace explorations with the ELN guerrilla, DPA emphasized.

The Colombian president recognized that Venezuela has played a very important role in the peace exploration dialogues with the ELN and the transfer of the rebel chief Erlinton Chamorro, alias "Antonio Garcia", to Cuba.

I called President Chavez and asked him to transport "Antonio Garcia" to Cuba, I then asked him for the favor of housing him in Venezuela. He is in Venezuela today, protected by the Venezuelan government not clandestinely, but as a petition of the government of Colombia", he added.

As well, Venezuela was instrumental in the capture and return of FARC rebel leader Gentil Alvis Patino to Colombia. The following was also reported in *El Universal*, a Venezuelan news daily: "Uribe revealed that this past Thursday he communicated with Chavez and asked him to facilitate the transportation of [a] rebel leader. He [Chavez] accepted and Venezuela did facilitate this, and I wish to give President Chavez my thanks publicly as a champion in this effort so that afterward no one starts to offer conjecture or distortions of this reality [that this happened as a result of my request to President Chavez]."¹

¹ Admiten Complot de Oficiales Colombianos y Exiliados del 11A." *EL UNIVERSAL* 18 December, 2005.
http://www.eluniversal.com/2005/12/18/pol_art_18116B.shtml



Venezuela Information Office
2000 P Street NW Suite 240
Washington, DC 20036
Voice: (202) 347-8081
Fax: (202) 347-8091

Venezuela has undeniably shown their true commitment against terrorism. Venezuela has called on the White House to honor its international treaty obligations and either extradite or prosecute Luis Posada Carriles for one of the bloodiest attacks on a civilian airliner in the annals of civil aviation. In 1976, he blew up a passenger plane with 73 innocent persons on board. Venezuela continues waiting for the White House to take action.

Military Equipment

The State Department's arms restriction follows recent U.S. attempts to thwart Venezuela's purchase of weapons from other countries. The U.S. blocked the sale of Spanish patrol boats to Venezuela as well as the sale of Brazilian aircraft. Ironically, these were to be used to further increase drug patrols and narco-trafficking missions in Venezuela. Moreover, regarding the Venezuelan purchase of Russian Rifles, 100,000 rifles for a 124,000 person army to replace 50 year old Belgian rifles does not constitute a danger to anyone. Indeed, Colombia has publicly announced to the contrary. In an Inter-Press Service News Agency Report from May 16, 2005 it was noted that in February 2005, Colombian Foreign Minister Carolina Barco said Venezuela's arms purchases "respond to Venezuela's internal needs."

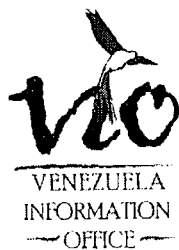
The Spanish Foreign Minister, Miguel Angel Moratinos, and Defense Minister Jose Bono characterized the sales not as arms but equipment to be used for non military purposes. Specifically, the Foreign Minister said, "I mentioned and I explained to Secretary of State Rice what has been called this so-called sale of arms. It has not been a sale of arms. It has been a sale of military equipment, that means planes, transport planes, patrol boats." Moratinos also underscored that the deal involved "no military offensive equipment".² On November 28, 2005, the Associated Press reported that the Defense Minister "Bono said neither the boats nor transport planes were armed and that the patrol planes were only equipped for self-defense. 'This is not a warplane,' he said."³

The president of the Brazilian Aeronautics Company (Embraer), Mauricio Botelho, stated this on January 20, 2006, regarding the US veto on the sale of 24 Embraer Tucano aircrafts to Venezuela: "Botelho declared his faith in a solution to the impasse, chiefly because the aircraft involved are not for belligerent use. 'The plane we are talking about is not an attack plane. Its purpose is law enforcement in missions directed against drug and arms trafficking,'" declared Botelho. The Brazilian Minister of Foreign Relations, Celso Amorim, remarked that Brazil was not in agreement with the US position. ("Embraer comments on impasse blocking sale of airplanes to Venezuela" Agencia Brasil 23 January, 2006).

Currently of all the nations on whom the U.S. has imposed an arms ban, Venezuela is the only one that has not been designated by the U.S. Department of State as a state sponsor of terrorism. Venezuela embraces the principle that a terrorist is not only he who engages in acts of terrorism, but also he who shelters terrorists.

² Spanish FM in US Explains Military Equipment Sale To Venezuela, Agence France Presse, Washington, 15 April, 2004.

³ <http://www.wtopnews.com/index.php?nid=389&sid=633316>



Venezuela Information Office
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Washington, DC 20036
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Fax: (202) 347-8091

THE BURTON RESOLUTION ON VENEZUELA AND DRUGS: THE CASE OF THE MISSING FACTS

On May 3, 2005, Rep. Dan Burton, Chair of the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs sent a "Dear Colleague" requesting original co-sponsorship of a resolution "Expressing the sense of Congress that the Government of Venezuela should actively support strategies for ensuring secure airport facilities that meet international certifications to prevent trafficking of controlled substances, narcotics, and laundered money.

Sad to say, the resolution is missing some salient facts. A review of "Whereas" clauses contained in the resolution shows how the missing facts paint a far different picture than the resolution concerning Venezuela and counter-narcotics activity.

RESOLUTION: "Whereas drug trafficking through Venezuela significantly increased in 2005.

FACT: 2005 was a record year of drug seizures by Venezuelan authorities. In fact, 2005 witnessed a 58 percent increase in drug seizures (as of November 2005) compared to drug seizures in 2004, according to Venezuelan authorities (Copyright 2005 Xinhua News Agency Xinhua General News Service, November 29, 2005 Tuesday 3:01 AM EST)

RESOLUTION: "Whereas the Government of Venezuela and the Venezuela National Anti-Drug Office (ONA) have officially reported only two seizures of currency in 2006...."

FACT: The Venezuelan National Anti-Drug Office records that the total seizure of drugs in the Venezuelan territory increased about 30% in the first trimester of 2006, compared to the first trimester of 2005.

DRUG PERIOD	FIRST TRIMESTER YEAR 2005 (KG)	FIRST TRIMESTER YEAR 2006 (KG)
TOTAL	10.464,960	13.335,88

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RESOLUTION: “Whereas on April 11, 2006, a commercial plane originating in Venezuela was seized in Mexico at the airport of Ciudad del Carmen, carrying 5.5 tons of cocaine with an estimated street value of \$100 million;”

FACT: According to Mexico’s Defense Department, the seizure happened due to information received from Venezuelan authorities. “The army was waiting for the plane on Monday at the airport of Ciudad de Carmen, 550 miles east of Mexico City, after receiving information from Venezuelan and U.S. authorities. Gen. Carlos Gaytan told a news conference.” (“Mexico Army Finds Tons of Cocaine on Plane”, E. Eduardo Castillo, Associated Press, April 12, 2006, [The Washington Post](#))

RESOLUTION: “Whereas in September 2005, the Government of the United States determined that ...Venezuela could no longer be certified as an ally in the war on drugs.”

FACT: This determination was largely based on Venezuela’s suspension of Drug Enforcement Agency activity in the country. The Resolution fails to mention that Venezuela and the United States have been engaged in negotiations for months, and are close to achieving an accord for a new set of protocols concerning the resumption of DEA activity in Venezuela. Needless to say, the timing of the Burton resolution condemning Venezuela, just as Venezuela is on the cusp of an agreement with the United States on counter-narcotics activity is not something that immediately strikes an observer as helpful to U.S.-Venezuela relations in the counter-narcotics area.

RESOLUTION: “Whereas seizure statistics at the Simon Bolivar International Airport in Caracas are not available because the Government of Venezuela does not publicize such statistics”

FACT: Below is a chart of the places where the Venezuelan Government seized drugs in 2005. Notice that the chart specifically includes airports. Whether the Venezuelan Government format its data in a way that others may deem better for counter-narcotics activity assessment does not seem to an objective observer to be the kind of issue that ought to warrant the condemnation of a government.

RESOLUTION: “Whereas the Department of State’s International Narcotics Control Strategy Report of 2006 describes an increased level of exploitation of the remote and poorly secured 2,200-kilometer border separating Venezuela and Colombia:”

FACT: The Department of State spent much time and energy to block Venezuela’s purchase of the necessary equipment to combat drug trafficking along the difficult-to-patrol border with Colombia. One prominent example of this is Venezuela’s planned, but thwarted, purchase of Brazilian aircraft, which was blocked by the Department of State and criticized by various members of the House International Relations Committee. Indeed, an examination of H.Con. Res. 328, sponsored by Rep. Mack, a first term member of that committee, reveals an erroneous description of the Brazilian aircraft as “fighter aircraft.” In contrast, the manufacturer of the aircraft described it in the way Venezuela described it, as an aircraft to help patrol the border. The president of the Brazilian Aeronautics Company (Embraer) Mauricio Botelho, stated this on January 20, 2006 regarding the U.S. veto on the sale of 24 Embraer Tucano aircraft to Venezuela: “The plane

we are talking about is not an attack plane. Its purpose is law enforcement in missions directed against drug and arms trafficking,” declared Botelho. (Embraer Comments on Impasse Blocking Sale of Airplanes To Venezuela”, Agencia Brasil 23 January 2006).

In light of the position taken by the Department of State, and some members of the House International Relations Committee, it is unfair – to put it delicately -- to now criticize Venezuela regarding its efforts to effectively patrol its border with Colombia.

RESOLUTION: “Whereas the Department of State’s International Narcotics Control Strategy Report of 2006 reports that Colombian cartels and Venezuelan criminal organizations (among other smugglers) routinely exploit a variety of routes and methods to move hundreds of tons of illegal drugs into Venezuela every year, and organized crime in Venezuela has begun to set up operations in foreign countries....”

FACT: In October 2005, Venezuela passed the Organic Law Against Illicit Traffic and Consumption of drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Published in Official Gazette No. 38.287. Caracas, Wednesday 5th October, 2005. Noted also in Globovision, October 5, 2005) As well, Venezuela passed The Organic Law Against Organized Crime on September 9, 2005, a law relating directly to the prevention and prosecution of human trafficking and drug trafficking. Given that the United States Department of State had called on Venezuela to pass this law, and given that the National Assembly did in fact pass the legislation, it strikes an observer as odd to say the least, that less than one year after its passage Congress would condemn the Venezuelan government for not taking enough steps to combat drug trafficking.

RESOLUTION: “Whereas Venezuela is a key transit point for drugs leaving Colombia....”

FACT: On September 27, 2005, Venezuela and Colombia signed an agreement one of whose principle objectives is the creation of greater coordination and communication between the drug enforcement authorities of the two countries in an effort to create more effective enforcement mechanisms against narcotics traffickers. The agreement was signed in Bogota by Colombia’s Vice Minister of Defense and the Executive Secretary of its drug enforcement office, as well as Venezuela’s Vice Minister of Citizen Security, and the Executive Secretary of Venezuela’s National Office Against Drugs. An observer wonders why the Burton Resolution fails to mention any of this.



EMBASSY OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA

Confiscation of drugs in Venezuelan territory
January- December 2005

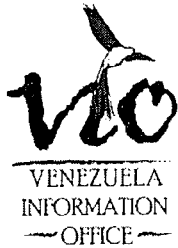
<u>Drug</u>	<u>Quantity</u> (kilograms)	<u>Percentage</u> (%)
Cocaine	58.435.835	75.37%
Marijuana	18.279.725	23.58%
Heroine	394.245	0.51%
Crack	347.780	0.45%
Basuco	68.340	0.09%
total	77.525.925	100%

Security agencies that participated in the confiscation of drugs
in Venezuelan territory

	<u>Cocaine</u> (kgs)	<u>Marijuan</u> <u>a</u> (kgs)	<u>Heroine</u> (kgs)	<u>Crack</u> (kgs)	<u>Basuco</u> (kgs)	<u>Total</u> (kgs)	<u>%</u>
National Guard	22755.325	14006.005	382.135	10.750	60.870	37215.085	48.00
CICPC	18655.900	3780.920	6.310	3.470	0.960	22447.560	28.95
Coast Guard of the army	14073.000	287.000	5.800	0.000	0.000	14365.800	18.53
DISIP	2514.510	1.550	0.000	0.000	0.230	2516.290	3.25
States Polices	437.100	204.250	0.000	333.560	6.280	981.190	1.27
Total	58435.835	18279.725	394.245	347.780	68.340	77525.925	100

PLACE WHERE SEIZURE TOOK PLACE IN THE VENEZUELAN TERRITORY
YEAR 2005

PLACE WHERE SEIZURE TOOK PLACE	QUANTITY	PERCENTAGE
COMPANY	475	29,16 %
AIRPORT	420	25,78 %
PUBLIC	320	19,64 %
SECURITY POINTS	136	7,98 %
RESIDENCE	130	8,35 %
VEHICLE	84	5,16 %
SHIP	24	1,47 %
PRISON	17	1,04 %
RANCH	16	0,98 %
RESTAURANT	03	0,18 %
HOTEL	02	0,12 %
PORT	02	0,12 %
TOTAL	1.629	100,00 %



Venezuela Information Office
2000 P Street, NW Suite 240
Washington, DC 20036
Voice: (202) 347-8081
Fax: (202) 347-8091

PETROCARIBE

Energy Stability for the Caribbean

THE NEED

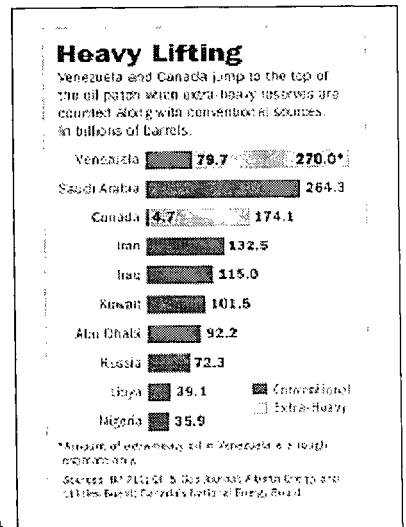
In the past, and especially today, Caribbean countries have been adversely affected by high oil prices. Financing costly oil imports is hard enough for most developing nations but many also face even higher prices because oil access comes primarily through international trade, which requires payment of an additional premium.

In response to this, the Venezuelan government was able to initiate PETROCARIBE in 2005 thanks to its vast oil reserves. Specifically, PETROCARIBE was formed to ease the energy burden on the Caribbean by eliminating the middleman and directly providing countries with oil at market prices, made affordable through the use of beneficial financing terms for participating countries. This financing arrangement helps to ensure the energy security of member countries and stimulates their economic and social development. Currently, most Caribbean countries are members of PETROCARIBE with the exception of Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, which are considering joining later. Haiti is currently negotiating her entry and is expected to join soon.

A significant part of PETROCARIBE is aimed at aiding member countries in developing their energy infrastructure, improving the diversity of their energy sources, and increasing their energy efficiency. There are also plans to create a fund, known as Alba-Caribe, which will gather the savings produced from these long-term financing agreements. The Fund will then be used to promote overall economic and social development in member countries, ensuring that benefits derived from this initiative substantially contribute to the fight against poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and lack of health care in member countries.

HOW IT WORKS

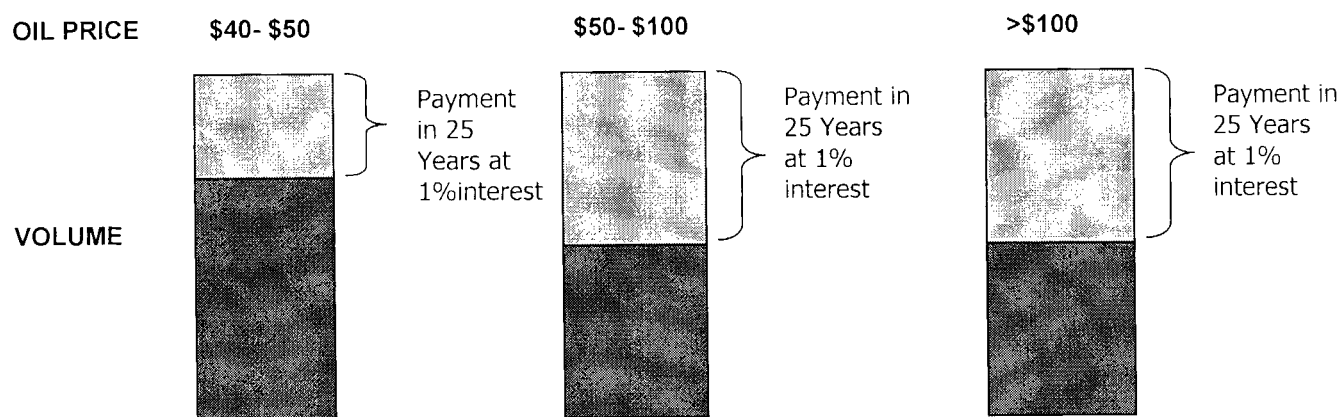
Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA), the national oil company of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, created a subsidiary, PDV Caribe, to sell oil directly to member countries at market prices. This allows them to save as much as \$8 per barrel. PDV will also transport the oil at cost, which allows member countries to save an additional \$1.50 per barrel. Flexible long-term financing arrangements will also be available depending on the market price at the time. If the price is above \$40 per barrel, 30% of the volume purchased is financed; if the price is above \$50 per barrel, 40% of the volume is financed; and if above \$100 per barrel, 50% of the volume will be financed. If the price of oil remains below \$40 per barrel, financing will extend for 17 years; if the



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price remains above \$40 per barrel, financing will increase to 25 years. Interest payments of only 1% will be charged, and a two year grace period is provided for all pricing scenarios. Finally, member countries have the option of deferring payments with preferential-priced goods and services.

PETROCARIBE FINANCING TERMS FOR MEMBER COUNTRIES



ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

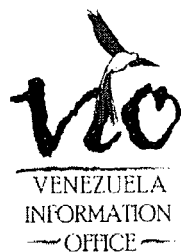
In addition to making oil available under very favorable financing terms, PETROCARIBE has the central goal of improving overall Caribbean refining capabilities and oil storage facilities. Towards this end plans include increasing and upgrading the capacity of refineries in Jamaica and elsewhere in the region; improving and expanding the transportation and storage facilities of each member country; building at least one new marine terminal; and exploring the construction of a "Trans-Caribbean Pipeline" from Venezuela which would link many of the Caribbean islands.

It is expected that these projects will provide the countries in the Caribbean with much needed improvements to their energy infrastructure, which in turn will provide more effective and efficient access to energy in emergencies and unforeseen circumstances such as natural disasters, accidents, and energy crises.

Similarly, the Alba-Caribe Fund will directly help finance economic and social development projects throughout the region including the construction of affordable housing, medical care for the poor and general infrastructure upgrades.

IMPACT ON THE REGION

PETROCARIBE is essentially an energy integration plan for the nations of the Caribbean. It is described by Venezuelans as a way of developing greater self-reliance amongst Caribbean countries, who have for too long been left behind in economic and social development. Such development if achieved, will contribute to the long-term growth and stability of the region. Considering the dire poverty faced by many in the region, spending today for a more secure and economically sound tomorrow is a model that makes sense to many.



Venezuela Information Office
733 15th Street NW Suite 932
Washington, DC 20005
Voice: (202) 347-8081
Fax: (202) 347-8091

What People are Saying about the CITGO-Venezuela Heating Oil Program

"Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez is a controversial political leader, but it's difficult to fault his decision to provide low-cost heating oil to 45,000 needy families in Massachusetts... Venezuelan politics and policies are matters for the Venezuelans to sort out. For now, the people of Massachusetts can recognize the self-interest but applaud the generosity."

Boston Globe editorial

"Venezuela's Largesse", Nov 23, 2005

"If Chávez and CITGO can forgo a small portion of Venezuela's windfall oil profits to make life a little easier for America's poor, what are our own oil companies and our leaders in Washington doing?"

Juan Gonzalez, New York Daily News columnist

"Warmth for Poor Consumers", Dec 6 2005

"We're for corporate philanthropy, and if that's what he [Chavez] chooses to do, we're certainly not going to argue with him."

Sam Bodman, U.S. Secretary of Energy

*"Energy Secretary: Gulf oil, natural gas won't recover until summer 2006" by
Deb Riechmann, AP, Dec 8, 2005*

"Ambassador Brownfield applauded CITGO's decision to provide discounted heating oil to communities in the U.S. and thanked the Venezuelan government for this initiative."¹

U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela William Brownfield

"Ambassador Brownfield Hopes Nations can Tone Down Rhetoric", Globovision, Dec 15, 2006

"I'm delighted that we'll be able to purchase oil at a lower price than the market for our citizens."

Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney (R)

"Venezuela's oil deal with Mass. draws heat" by Andrew Miga, AP, Dec 1, 2005

"We need to repair our relations with that nation [Venezuela]"

Sen. Lincoln Chafee (R- RI), discussing CITGO heating oil initiative possibilities in R.I.

*"Venezuela, R.I. may strike deal on discounted oil" by John Mulligan, Providence Journal,
Dec 14 2005*

¹ Original article in Spanish at: www.globovision.com/new.php?nid=16189

"I will not take the position of opposing this program, because I don't... Actually I am pleased with this gesture... What would be an adverse impact would be if people who are uncomfortable with Venezuelan politics simply say that this is a bad thing..."²

Sen. Richard Lugar (R- IN)

"Senador Republicano Insta a EE.UU Mejorar Relaciones con Venezuela", El Universal, Dec 7, 2005

"The cost of heating oil has risen dramatically and the federal government has failed to provide the resources needed to help Maine citizens. We are grateful to Citgo and the Venezuelan government for their generosity."

Gov. John Baldacci (D-ME)

"Maine, Venezuela reach oil deal" by Tom Bell, Portland Press Herald, Jan 11, 2006

"Given the recent cuts to federal energy assistance programs, the Baldacci administration would have been remiss if it didn't pursue the deep discount on home heating oil given to Massachusetts by Venezuela's leader, Hugo Chavez."

Portland Press Herald (ME) Editorial

Venezuela's Chavez an Unlikely Santa, Nov 28, 2005

"This generous offer [by Venezuela-CITGO] is especially welcome because Washington has been unable to act on what is a clear necessity for the poor."

Bangor Daily News Editorial

Help From CITGO, Jan 12, 2006

"With temperatures dropping and oil prices soaring, we're all worried sick about people without the means to heat their homes. It is gratifying that at least one major oil company is willing to step up."

U.S. Rep. William Delahunt (D- MA)

Press release, Nov 22, 2005

www.house.gov/delahunt/citgodeal.htm

"Low-income residents of my district who will benefit from this historic agreement are going to see real savings. We are truly grateful to CITGO and the Venezuelan people for their generosity."

U.S. Rep José Serrano (D-NY)

Press release, Dec 6, 2005

www.house.gov/apps/list/press/ny16_serrano/051206heatingoil.html

"This allows us to save, depending on how the weather fares, \$400,000 to \$500,000 for the winter. We can save and then pass on some of that on to our tenants, who are very much under financial pressure."

Shaun M. Belle, president of Mount Hope, a Bronx non-profit housing association

"Venezuela to Help Bronx Residents with Heating Oil Bills" by Manny Fernandez and Juan Forero, New York Times, Dec 6, 2005

² original article in Spanish at: www.eluniversal.com/2005/12/06/pol_ava_06.1641259.shtml

"Nobody asks any of these questions to Saudi Arabia. Nobody asks any of these questions to Kuwait. Nobody asks any of these questions to Iran, Iraq or Azerbaijan or any of the other countries we get oil from.[In Venezuela,] you have a country led by somebody who cares for the poor... I wrote every single oil company asking them to give us a little break on the price of oil after they made tens of billions, if not hundreds of billions of dollars in one quarter. I didn't hear back from one of them. The only one that came back was CITGO."

Joseph P. Kennedy II, Chairman, Citizens Energy Corporation³

"Fuel pact defended at local signing" By Raja Mishra, Boston Globe, Nov 23, 2005

"It's more than saving money, he's reaching out to poor people. It's an act of charity."

Father John Jenik, Our Lady of Refuge Church, located in the South Bronx

"Venezuela provides heating oil to New Yorkers in low-income area" by Paul Burkhardt, AP, Dec 6, 2005

"It's ironic that a South American country is coming to the rescue of poor people in Philadelphia, but the issue is whether you freeze to death in winter. No one, Democrat or conservative Republican, should raise questions about where it comes from, but should applaud it."

Jonathan Stein, general counsel of Community Legal Services (Philadelphia)

"Philadelphia's Unlikely Energy Source" by Thomas Fitzgerald, Philadelphia Inquirer, Jan 27, 2006

"Why would it matter where [the oil] comes from? Venezuela is doing a good thing for people."

Bridget Durkin, age 70, Quincy, MA resident

"Venezuela's oil deal with Mass. draws heat" by Andrew Miga, AP, Dec 1, 2005

"Just because he [President Hugo Chávez] has problems with President Bush, that's not going to affect me... My political views aren't going to keep me warm. I know people keep talking about this, but it's a gesture that someone wanted to make, and it's going to help lots of people, not just me."

Linda Kelly, Quincy, MA resident

"Oil Deal is Her Lifeline," by Adrian Walker, Boston Globe, Nov 24, 2005

"I appreciate what he did, not for me only, but for everybody... Sometimes it's so cold that you have to put two blankets on you, so that you can stay warm."

Georgina Colón, South Bronx resident

News at 6pm, Fox 5 WNYW, Dec 6, 2005

"It keeps people warm, regardless of where it came from. There are 48,000 people in Maine who need this oil. Take the politics out of it."

Malcolm Lyons, age 89, a retired hunting guide and program recipient

"Oil in Tank, Politics in Driveway" by Tom Bell, Portland Press Herald, Jan 13, 2006

³ Citizens Energy is a non-profit oil distribution group with which CITGO is partnering in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island.

"We have Passamaquoddys we've had to refuse [help with heating oil to] in the past. There's never enough. This help we're getting from the Venezuelan government is unexpected but deeply appreciated."

Robert Newell, Passamaquoddy tribe governor at Indian Township, ME

*"State, tribes, Citgo sign fuel deals; Heating oil delivered to needy Mainers" by Bill Trotter,
Bangor Daily News, Jan 13, 2006*

"I didn't even go to stores during the holidays because I knew I didn't have any money to buy gifts. I have a 2-year-old granddaughter, and I just couldn't get her anything...now maybe I can"

Gerardine Shields, age 64, Philadelphia resident

*"Venezuela's discounted oil starts rolling into region," by Adam Fifield, Philadelphia Inquirer,
Jan 29, 2006*

"It's an extraordinary savings for poor people. We are pleased that Citgo has the resources to be able to help keep people in New England warm this winter. In Venezuela, as in your country, our indigenous people have been left behind for too long."

Penobscot Tribal Chief James Sappier at Indian Township, ME

*"State, tribes, Citgo sign fuel deals; Heating oil delivered to needy Mainers" by Bill Trotter,
Bangor Daily News, Jan 13, 2006*

Part II: Press Releases

DOE Cites Venezuela's Openness To Foreign Participation in Energy Projects

Foreign Investment Harder in Other Countries According To U.S National Security Review

A new report by the United States Department of Energy showcases Venezuela as a comparably stable platform for foreign participation in energy projects more so than the country's second and third leading suppliers, Saudi Arabia and Mexico (Canada is the first supplier of oil to the U.S.).

The report also says Venezuela is more open to foreign participation in energy exploration and development than China, which is the United State's third trading partner (and with whom the U.S. had a \$175 billion trade imbalance in 2004).

The report, titled "Section 1837: National Security Review of International Energy Requirements", is mandated by the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and compares examples of U.S. company participation in eight different oil-producing countries.

In the report, the DOE mentions that there is substantial U.S. and foreign investment in Venezuela's strategic energy associations, which produce, upgrade and export heavy oil reserves. The report mentions that there are 33 Operations Service Agreements to produce oil from existing fields, which include widespread U.S. and foreign participation. The report goes on to mention that the U.S. and other foreign firms have won the rights to the development of new exploration and production areas in Venezuela.

According to the Associated Press, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has been encouraging domestic entrepreneurs to create a private Venezuelan oil company. In a meeting with top business executives in Caracas on Feb. 17, President Chavez said that Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) would be interested in partnering with such a company to develop projects such as the exploration for heavy crude in the Orinoco belt or extracting natural gas from the Mariscal Sucre of Rafael Urdaneta gas fields.

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The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is the world's 5th largest producer of petroleum, and has the largest reserves in the western hemisphere, as well as the largest reserves outside of the Middle East. Venezuela is the fourth largest supplier of petroleum to the United States, providing close to 570 million barrels per year to American refineries, including eight U.S. refineries owned by CITGO Petroleum Company, wholly owned by Petroleos de Venezuela SA (PDVSA), Venezuela's state oil company.

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Read the report at: <http://www.pi.energy.gov/pdf/library/EPACT1837FINAL.pdf>

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New U.S. State Department Report Highlights Venezuela's Successful Efforts Against Drug Smuggling

Record amounts of cocaine and heroin seized in 2005 despite decertification, according to International Narcotics Control Strategy Report

Venezuela is a committed partner in the fight against drug smuggling, according to a U.S. State Department report released March 2, 2006. The report notes that Venezuelan law enforcement agencies seized 54 metric tons of cocaine and 240 kilograms of heroin during the first eight months of 2005, a record amount of illicit narcotics cargos. It also states that two new laws, the "Law Against Organized Crime" and the "Law Against the Trafficking and Consumption of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances" passed in October 2005 have put Venezuelan in compliance with the 1988 United Nations Drug Convention. In addition, money laundering was made a predicate offense.

Titled "International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2006" (INCSR), the report is the U.S. Government's country-by-country two-volume publication that describes efforts to attack all aspects of the international drug trade, chemical control, money laundering and financial crimes.

The INCSR goes on to mention that despite Washington decertification, Venezuelan authorities have continued to comply fully with the provisions of the maritime narcotics agreement, rapidly approving requests for the boarding of Venezuelan-flagged vessels suspected of engaging in drug smuggling, allowing the U.S. government to take law enforcement action when required. The report also states that the Venezuela government participated in the "Operacion Seis Fronteras VI" during 2005, auditing several companies for possible diversion of precursor chemicals with assistance from the DEA in 2005.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is not a significant drug producing or consuming country. According to a European Union (EU) study, an astounding 2.3 percent of the Venezuelan population has tried illegal drugs at some time of their life. The level is low, particularly compared to countries, such as Spain and the U.S. where consumption is 9.5 percent and 7.9 percent respectively.

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Read The Report at: <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2006/>

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**CONGRESSIONAL DOUBLESPEAK ON VENEZUELA: REP. MACK (R-FL)
RESOLUTION RIFE WITH INACCURACIES, FALSE ACCUSATIONS**

On Thursday, Mar 16, 2006, House of Representatives Congressional Resolution 328 (H. Con. Res. 328) introduced by Congressman Connie Mack (R-FL) will be marked up in the House of Representatives International Relations committee. This is the first step in the process of bringing the non-binding resolution to the House floor for a vote. Unfortunately, H. Con. Res. 328 presents a series of egregiously inaccurate charges and misleading statements as the basis for its argument.

Also troubling is the Congressional action recommended by the resolution, which includes increased funding of organizations such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which a New York Times exposé recently reported as a key actor in the destabilization of the democratic government in Haiti.¹

Some illustrative comparisons of H Con Res 328 with reality include the following:

"Whereas President Chavez made sweeping changes to the political landscape in Venezuela, including the approval of a new constitution, which established a unicameral national assembly..."

REALITY: Both the decision to rewrite the constitution and the approval of the constitution were publicly mandated through national referendum. The constitution was approved by an overwhelming majority of 72 percent of voters.² As for a unicameral assembly structure, Venezuela shares this with a number of countries, including Sweden, Denmark and Israel.

"Whereas President Chavez purchased 100,000 Russian AK-103 assault rifles..., has signed an agreement with Spain to purchase Spanish-built warships, and has initiated discussions to buy Brazilian fighter aircraft;"

REALITY: Venezuela's rifle purchase represents 100,000 rifles that will replace 50-year-old Belgian rifles for a 124,000-person army (i.e. less than one rifle per soldier). Regarding the purchase from Spain, both Spain and Venezuela have repeatedly stated that the ships are explicitly for counter-narcotics activity and other non-military purposes³. The Brazilian planes are similarly for use against drug and arms-trafficking.⁴

"Whereas President Chavez is supporting radical forces in Colombia, Bolivia, and Ecuador...an effort to destabilize the already fragile democratic governments;"

REALITY: Colombian president Alvaro Uribe has repeatedly lauded his strong and friendly relationship with President Chavez, even thanking him for being "a champion" in anti-terrorist and

¹ CITE NYT ARTICLE. ADD The U.S. Office of XXXXX also noted NED'S involvement in the destabilization of the democratic government in Venezuela during the 2002 attempted coup d'état.

² "Chavez Faces 'Tough Road' in Venezuela" by Serge F. Kovaleski, *Washington Post*, December 17, 1999.

³ "Spanish FM, in US, Explains Military Equipment Sale to Venezuela" Agence France Presse, April 15, 2004.

⁴ "Embraer comments on impasse blocking sale of airplanes to Venezuela" *Agencia Brasil*, January 23 2006.

drug trafficking border cooperation.⁵ In addition, the countries have cemented ties by signing several recent economic agreements. Regarding Bolivia, presumably the reference for the former is to democratically-elected Bolivian President Evo Morales, who recently hosted U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. In Ecuador, Venezuela has responded several times to the Ecuadorian requests to buy Ecuador's bonds and support its fulfillment of international oil contracts by lending the country crude oil – actions aimed at financial stabilization, not political destabilization.

"Whereas president Chavez has also associated himself with other dictators..."; "Whereas President Chavez visited Saddam Hussein..."

REALITY: Bush Administration lifting of sanctions that had barred scheduled and charter air service, banned imports of Libyan refined petroleum products and impounded \$1.3 billion in Libyan assets is far more valuable to Libya's dictator Muammar Qaddafi than any alleged association with Venezuela.⁶ Regarding President Chavez' visit to Iraq, the context missing is that Chavez visited all the oil-producing Middle Eastern countries after Venezuela assumed the presidency of OPEC in 1999 as part of what CNN described as "a tour of Venezuela's 10 fellow member states of OPEC."⁷ In any case, the U.S. government support for Hussein throughout the 1980s (including Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's infamous 1984 visit) and its continuing support for allied dictatorships such as the Saudi Arabian regime make this charge disingenuous.

"Whereas President Chavez undermines traditional labor unions in Venezuela by creating parallel, competing, government-affiliated unions within the same company, which violates current International Labor Organization (ILO) standards;"

REALITY: The new Unión Nacional de Trabajadores (UNT) union is not a government creation, but rather was established by workers concerned about the cozy relationship between the old union federation (CTV) and the Venezuelan Chamber of Commerce (FEDECAMARAS) as well as mistrust of CTV leadership ties to violent factions of the Venezuelan opposition.⁸ Venezuelan labor movement expert Dr. Steve Ellner (author of "Venezuelan Politics in the Chavez Era and former visiting professor at Duke University) noted in a paper presented at the Social Science Research Council in March 2005 that of UNT's 21-member coordinating committee is split 50-50 between chavistas and non-chavistas.

"Whereas President Chavez has instituted a media responsibility law which places arbitrary restrictions on broadcast media coverage..."

REALITY: Even opposition leader Teodoro Petkoff has noted that unlike in countries such as Cuba, Venezuelans had access to a "wide variety of news choices."⁹ This opinion is seconded by Columbia University Journalism School professor John Dinges who noted in another Herald article "Venezuela has an energetic, free and combative radio, television and newspaper establishment..."

⁵ "Admiten Complot de Oficiales Colombianos y Exiliados del 11A" El Universal, December 18, 2005. This particular article refers to cooperation between the countries on the transport of a rebel leader and Uribe's verification of an anti-Chavez plot hatched by Colombian military officials.

⁶ CITE

⁷ BETTER CITE CNN.com, August 8, 2000

⁸ For example, CTV Secretary General Carlos Ortega emerged as the head of the fateful opposition demonstration in April 2002 which launched the failed coup against Chavez.

⁹ "U.S. shouldn't try to counter Chavez TV network," Miami Herald, August 4, 2005.

Venezuelan media outlets are not restricted in their political coverage. To illustrate, we have included below a particularly bizarre article that ran last week in one of Venezuela's primary opposition newspapers, *El Universal*, accusing Venezuelan state television of committing the "crime" of "indoctrination" of children.

ARTICLE FROM EL UNIVERSAL (A VENEZUELAN OPPOSITION DAILY NEWSPAPER)
Caracas, Monday March 06, 2006

Opposition Party Complains About Forced Indoctrination of Children

A complaint will be filed with domestic and foreign organizations for "the crime committed by the current government, under the aegis of President Hugo Chávez, where there is forced political participation and indoctrination, abusing of the rights of free thinking and protection of identity of Venezuelan children," Antonio Ledezma, the head of opposition Alianza Bravo Pueblo, said.

The complaint will be made with the Attorney General Office to attest to "all such irregularities," and to the Venezuelan Chapter of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (Unicef.)

He regretted that the Attorney General Office fails to protect Venezuelan children. Last Sunday, during the TV and radio show "Aló Presidente," a girl "appeared to praise, extol the personality of the current President of the Republic," the official claimed.

According to Ledezma, this is evidence of indoctrination advanced by the Government, "and it is also a sample of what they want to do in the schools with those projects that the Government intends to approve in the so-called National Assembly."

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For a full description of the errors, half-truths and misstatements please visit:
<http://www.rethinkvenezuela.com/downloads/hcr328.htm>

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Venezuela Resolution Relies on Erroneous Information:
Drug Language a Policy 'Embarrassment'

This Wednesday, Congressman Dan Burton (R-IN) will introduce a resolution in the House of Representatives condemning Venezuela for supposedly not cooperating with the United States in the fight against narco-trafficking. The Burton Resolution is filled with distorted facts and half-truths that paint an inaccurate picture of Venezuela's fight against drugs.

While the Burton Resolution is non-binding, his strategy seems targeted to create a public record of condemnation that can be used to justify future measures against Venezuela. Simply put, it another tool to discredit the Venezuelan government during an election year.

The resolution is riddled with inaccurate information:

- 1) The Burton Resolution claims that drug trafficking significantly increased in Venezuela last year. In reality, Venezuelan drug seizures were on the increase, meaning that enforcement was way up, trafficking. In fact, 2005 was a record year for drug seizures by Venezuelan authorities. Moreover, the Venezuelan National Anti-Drug Office reported that the total seizure of drugs in the first trimester of 2006 increased 30% compared to the first trimester of 2005 (see link below).
- 2) The resolution cites a high-profile case of an airplane filled with cocaine that was seized in Mexico last month as an example of Venezuela's supposed lack of enforcement. The implication simply ignores the fact that tips from Venezuelan officials led to seizure this plane, as noted in this story in the Washington Post: <http://www.rethinkvenezuela.com/news/04-12-06ap.html>
- 3) The resolution claims that the Venezuelan government does not publicize its drug seizure statistics, which is simply a false statement; you can find them in the Venezuelan National Office of Anti-Drugs at: <http://www.ona.gob.ve/Estadisticas.htm>

In addition, the resolution fails to mention that Venezuela and the United States have been engaged in negotiations for months and are close to achieving an accord for a new set of protocols concerning the resumption of DEA activity in Venezuela.

"Public policy must be grounded in facts," said Eric Wingerter, Public Education Director of the Venezuela Information Office. "I'm not sure where Mr. Burton is getting his information, but this bill is embarrassingly inaccurate."

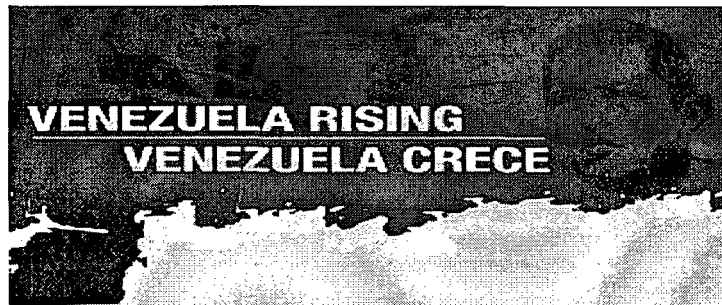
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For more information on the inaccuracies in the Burton Resolution, please visit
<http://www.rethinkvenezuela.com/downloads/burtonres.htm>

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COMMEMORATION
TO HONOR THE 4TH
ANNIVERSARY
OF THE

**RETURN OF DEMOCRACY
TO VENEZUELA
ON APRIL 13TH, 2002**



**APRIL 13, 2006, 6-8PM
FESTIVAL CENTER, 1640 COLUMBIA RD, NW
WASHINGTON DC 20009**

Film Showing: Venezuela Rising

As seen through the eyes of grandmother and community organizer Gladys Bolivar, the documentary follows her and her compatriots five days before it is to be decided by popular referendum whether Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez will continue in office or step down. Issues of democracy and politics are addressed -- what constitutes a free and fair election -- and is that enough to ensure citizen participation? How are elections the ultimate measure of a thriving democracy? Venezuela Rising gets behind the headlines and into the neighborhoods of Caracas to find out how participatory democracy works on the ground.

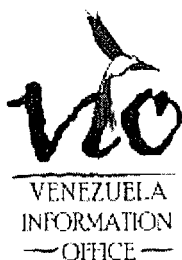
Panel Discussion

Mark Weisbrot, Co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research
Edward Mercado, Communications Coordinator, Venezuela Information Office

For more information: 202-347-8081 x602



Part III: Articles



As Elections Loom, Venezuela's Opposition Won't Commit to Participation

By Eric Wingerter
Venezuela Information Office
April 3, 2006

Last Thursday the *New York Times* ran a remarkable profile of the Venezuelan opposition. Titled "Rifts Plague Anti-Chavez Venezuelans¹," *Times* reporter Juan Forero details the chaos that marks Venezuelan opposition parties in the run-up to the this year's presidential elections. Significantly, these rifts are not ideological in nature—precious little of the discussion centers on values, ideas or agendas. The split within the anti-Chavez faction involves whether or not they will participate in elections at all. Having controlled all aspects of Venezuelan political life for generations before President Chavez was elected in 1998, the traditional parties are fighting over whether they will commit to democracy.

The *Times* describes presidential candidate Julio Borges as a lonely voice within the mainstream opposition for encouraging participation in the elections. While other anti-Chavez leaders claim that despite repeated failures at the ballot box, they actually represent the hearts and minds of most Venezuelans, Borges seems to understand that a large majority of Venezuelans are happy with their president.

"We spent seven years trying to get Chávez out of Miraflores," Mr. Borges said, referring to the presidential palace. "What we have to do is get Chávez out of people's hearts."

In other political realities, this condescending statement might be seen as a negative way to frame a campaign, but within the often-bizarre psychology of Venezuelan opposition leaders, it represents a huge step toward facing reality. For the first time, a major anti-Chavez candidate recognizes the deep support of the President by his countrymen.

Self-Destructive Tactics

Attend any pro-Chavez rally in Venezuela, and you'll see T-shirts, signs and hats that read "Chavez los tiene locos." Loosely translated, the meaning is "Chavez has 'em going crazy," in reference to the opposition. The Chavistas have a good point. In the past six

¹ Forero, Juan, "Rifts Plague Anti-Chavez Venezuelan," *New York Times*, March 31, 2006
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/31/world/americas/31venez.html>

years, guttural hatred of the president and flat-out denial of his broad support have plagued the opposition, and led to catastrophic tactical choices.

In 2002, when rebel military officials conspired with Venezuelan business leaders and a corrupt labor federation to kidnap President Chavez, and then enlisted the help of national media outlets to spin the coup as a “democratic” move, Venezuelans came out to the streets by the hundreds of thousands to demand the return of their elected leader. Coup leaders were shaken when democracy was restored after two days, as many of them honestly believed that they had widespread popular support for the takeover.

Later that year, when oil executives tried forcing Chavez out of office through a three-month worker lockout that collapsed the Venezuelan economy, the opposition further alienated themselves from the Venezuelan electorate, many of whom suffered profoundly from shortages of food, cooking oil, gasoline and electricity.

During the 2004 recall referendum, opposition groups, led by the U.S.-funded NGO *Sumate*, publicized phony exit polls to undermine President Chavez’s decisive 60-40 victory. International observers immediately condemned the move, and former President Jimmy Carter held a press conference to denounce *Sumate* who, in his words, “deliberately distributed this erroneous exit poll data in order to build up, not only the expectation of victory, but also to influence the people still standing in line.”² Anti-Chavez groups responded with a campaign of harassment against Carter, and many continue to deny the international observers’ conclusion that the results were legitimate.

Last fall, the largest opposition parties pulled out just days before congressional elections were held, when polls showed they would lose by wide margins. A week earlier, they had gone to the Organization of American States (OAS) with a long list of demands to be met before they would participate. When the National Electoral Council met their demands, they walked away anyway, handing over every seat in the National Assembly to pro-Chavez candidates³.

Democracy and the Venezuelan Character

Clearly, these tactics play better in the international press than among the average Venezuelan. The editorial writers at the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times and the Wall Street Journal can applaud the point being made against the president they love to hate, without directly suffering the short term hardship (job losses, food rationing, etc.) or the long term damage (dismantling of democracy, aggressive civic polarization) imposed on the Venezuelan people.

But on the home front, the opposition leaders are in disarray not because of the *failure* of these actions, but because of the *nature* of their tactics. Venezuelans like living in a democracy, and they are fiercely proud of their tradition of peaceful government

² Jones, Bart, “Divisions Harden after Chavez Victory,” National Catholic Reporter, September 8, 2004
<http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/articles.php?artno=1275>

³ Gott, Richard, “Democracy Under Threat,” *The Guardian*, December 6, 2006
<http://www.rethinkvenezuela.com/news/12-06-05tguk.html>

transitions. While much of South America languished under military dictatorships in the 1970s and 80s, Venezuela remained free and democratic (albeit with an ever-widening gap between the rich and poor).

This democratic nature of the Venezuelan electorate was made evident last fall, when continent-wide poll results were made public by the Chilean polling firm Latinobarometro. While citizens of other Latin American countries expressed growing reservations about democracy as the best tool to address their problems, Venezuela, along with Uruguay, topped the list of nations that prefer democracy over all other forms of government. What's more, Venezuelans were more likely than citizens of any other Latin American country to describe their government as "totally democratic."⁴

The Formation of an Un-Venezuelan Opposition

So how is it that the traditional ruling parties believed that strategies that violate the very character of their culture would ever be effective in Venezuela? And why have they clung to anti-democratic tactics after each one has blown up in their face? A number of historic and cultural factors help shed light on the situation.

A Lazy System: the Punto Fijo Pact

In the late 1950's, Venezuela's dominant political leaders signed a power-sharing agreement that allowed two political parties, Accion Democratica (AD) and Social Cristiano Copei (Copei) to effectively shut out all other parties from participating in political life. In theory, the Punto Fijo pact was intended to prevent extremist social movements from taking power and destabilizing the young democracy, but in practice it led to decades of patronage, and created an enormous amount of political apathy in the majority of Venezuelans who believed, credibly, that their voice would never be represented by political leaders.

Another unintended consequence of the pact was that national political leaders were not required to spend a lot of time with the Venezuelan people in order to be successful. Certainly, they had to engage in a lot of politicking *within* the two political parties, but the party makeup represented a narrow slice of the Venezuelan public. Once an official had gained prominence within the party structure, he was virtually guaranteed a seat in office because voters simply had no other alternative.

President Chavez was the first Venezuelan since Punto Fijo to win the presidency as a third-party candidate. While he was boosted by a number of historical and cultural factors that came into alignment by 1998, Chavez's presidential campaign, out of necessity, was grounded in an enormous grassroots mobilization effort. For this reason, Chavez the President has his finger on the pulse of the Venezuelan electorate in a way the opposition never did.

Life in a Bubble

The Venezuelan upper classes, which make up the bulk of opposition leadership, truly live in a world apart from the rest of the country. Caracas's finer neighborhoods are

⁴ <http://www.rethinkvenezuela.com/news/latbar2005.html>

made up of gated communities and high-end shopping malls. Many have never set foot the barrios and working class neighborhoods populated by the majority of *Caraqueños*. When a nicely dressed Venezuelan woman living in Caracas's tony Altamira neighborhood told me she didn't know a single person in the country who supported President Chavez, I don't think she was exaggerating.

What's more, this upper-class worldview is reflected in the majority of the Venezuelan media. Telenovelas and reality programs are teeming with rich and fashionable Venezuelans with expensive tastes. Today you have to turn on state television to see the diverse cultural makeup of Venezuelan society. Before Chavez, even on government TV it was rare to see, for example, an Afro-Venezuelan, even though *afrodescendientes* make up a significant share of the Venezuelan citizenry.

So when the returns from the recall referendum were broadcast, and Chavez had won by a sweeping margin, it is almost understandable that some people found it easier to believe in an elaborate conspiracy between Chavez, Carter, and the OAS, rather than concede that they may have misjudged the nature of their own country. For many wealthy Venezuelans, the slow understanding that they are in the minority is only now beginning to sink in.

Influence from abroad

Of course, there is well-documented evidence to suggest that many of the tactics used by the Venezuelan opposition are not—to use a particularly chavista term—endogenous. It makes sense that strategies that violate the Venezuelan character were never dreamed up by Venezuelans in the first place.

With regard to the 2002 coup, we know that at least two of the top military leaders were trained in the notorious School of the Americas in Columbus, Georgia⁵. We also know that the Congressionally-financed National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the U.S Department of Defense provided training and financial support to the individuals and organizations involved in the bloody uprising⁶.

In the run-up to the 2004 recall referendum, we know that *Sumate*, the very organization chastised by President Carter for attempting to undermine the results, received more than \$50,000 from the NED⁷, and that the Democratic Coordinator, the umbrella organization representing all of the organizations that led the effort, received training and strategy advice from the NED-financed Center for International Private Enterprise⁸.

And last February, the Christian Science Monitor ran a jaw-dropping story on efforts by a little-known subsidiary of the U.S. Agency on International Development (USAID),

⁵ "SOA/WHINSEC Grads in the News," School of the Americas Watch, October 24, 2004
<http://www.soaw.org/new/article.php?id=205>

⁶ United States Department of State, Office of Inspector General, "A Review of U.S. Policy Toward Venezuela: November 2001 - April 2002," Report Number 02-OIG-003, July 2002,
<http://oig.state.gov/documents/organization/13682.pdf>.

⁷ NED Grant Agreement No. 2003-548.0, September 12, 2003.

⁸ NED Grant 2002-021, 2/1/02 – 9/30/03, CIPE Quarterly Report, April, May, June 2003.

known as the Office on Transition Initiatives (OTI), which distributed \$4.5 million dollars to opposition parties in 2005 for “overtly political” work aligned with U.S. “foreign policy goals.”⁹ If Venezuelans seem paranoid about U.S. intervention in their democracy, they have good reason to fear.

All this helps explain how the traditional Venezuelan opposition has become so disconnected from its countrymen, but also why candidates like Borges are beginning to buck the trend, rolling up their sleeves and actually interacting with the Venezuelan electorate.

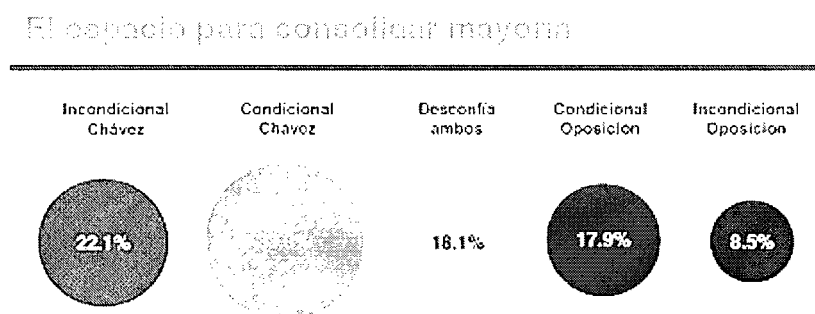
Not that it will make much difference.

The Presidential Election

Barring extreme unforeseen circumstances, President Hugo Chavez will be elected to a second term this December. As described above, the opposition is in utter disarray. But more importantly, new data indicate that the extent of popular support for President Chavez appears deeper today than pundits on either side may have imagined.

Candidates like Julio Borges may be refashioning their tone and image in the wake of polling results, released in March, which surprised even the Chavez camp. The results came from the firm Consultores 21, an opposition aligned polling firm with 20 years experience in Venezuela, confirms a large base of support for the President. Full results are available here: <http://www.noticierodigital.net/encuc21marzo06.pdf>

Let’s look at the most significant findings:



Nearly a quarter of likely voters offer their “unconditional” support for the President, meaning virtually nothing will change their minds. The largest group of Venezuelans, fully one-third of the electorate, supports Chavez “conditionally”. In other words, if the opposition unveils a truly spectacular candidate, they might switch, but for the most part, they are casting their lot with the President. Before this poll was released, conventional political wisdom held that the undecided voters would make up the largest chunk of the

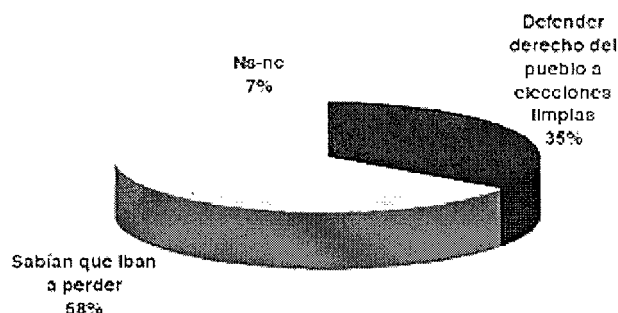
⁹ Gould, Jens Erik, “Democracy’s ‘Special Forces’ Face Heat,” *Christian Science Monitor*, February 6, 2006. <http://www.rethinkvenezuela.com/news/02-06-06csm.html>

electorate, but it turns out that even if every undecided voter decides to vote for an opposition candidate—a near impossibility—Chavez would still win with 56% of the vote.

What's more, it appears that the depth of the opposition is as weak as it is small. International press attention often focuses on just how passionate the Venezuelan opposition is. But according to this poll—again from a respected firm aligned with the opposition—only 8.5% of the electorate would vote against Chavez no matter what. Most of the opposition may be inclined to vote against Chavez, but would consider voting for him in the right circumstances. Add the two opposition figures together, and you just barely surpass the level of “unconditional” support that Chavez enjoys.

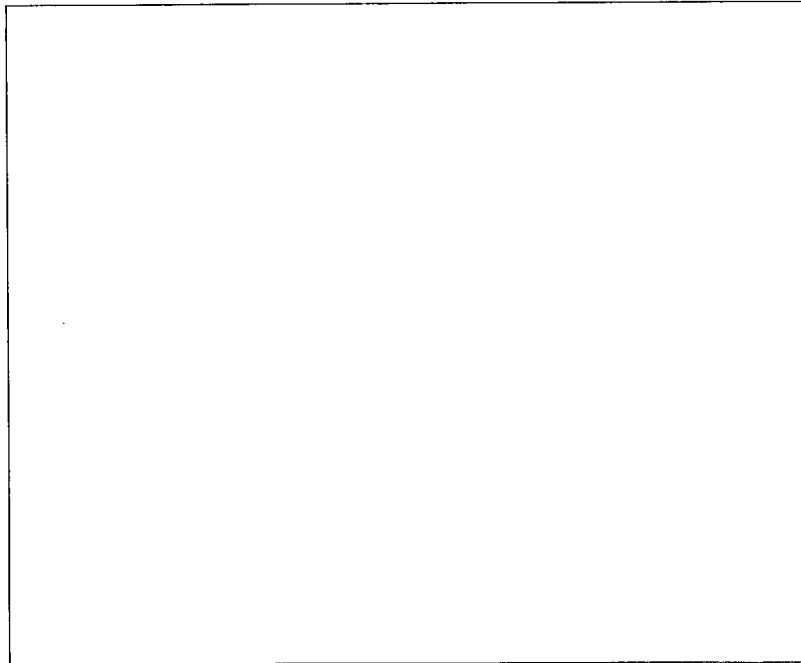
La motivación del retiro de la oposición en el 2007

¿Con quién está más de acuerdo: con quienes dicen que esos candidatos se retiraron para defender el derecho del pueblo a unas elecciones limpias o con quienes dicen que se retiraron porque sabían que iban a perder porque no tienen apoyo del pueblo?



To get a sense of why Venezuelans have so little faith in the opposition, the graphic above demonstrates the way they feel about the boycott of the congressional elections last December. The question asks, “With whom do you agree most: with those who say that the [opposition] candidates boycotted to defend the right of the people to clean elections, or with those who say that they boycotted because they knew that they would lose since they did not have the support of the people?” Fifty-eight percent said it was because they were going to lose. Barely a third said it was a statement on clean elections.

And on the positive side, here is why Chavez enjoys such wide support:



The question is about President Chavez's ability to achieve important benchmarks in the country's social development. From top to bottom, Venezuelans give him high marks in improving:

Education (69.4%)
Housing (65.3%)
Health Care (65.2%)
Road Construction (56.3%)
Purchasing Power (54%)
Employment (53.6%)

The President gets middling marks on two of Venezuela's oldest and most chronic problems: **Security (49.8%)**, and the **Struggle against corruption (49.3%)**.

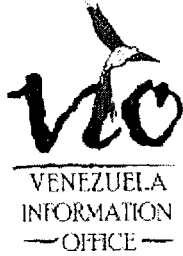
In general, Venezuelans think the country is heading in the right direction. They are happy with President Chavez, and often disgusted with the opposition, who rarely seem to understand the average Venezuelan. These facts can't make the anti-Chavez factions happy.

The question remains: will opposition leaders make a commitment to democracy this year? To be sure, they have almost zero hope of winning the presidency this December. Yet time and again, each anti-democratic action they've undertaken has marginalized them in the eyes of Venezuelan voters. If they choose to boycott, as they did last year, they will further alienate themselves at home. Worse, over time their actions may cause a more chronic problem by undermining Venezuelans' faith in democracy itself.

Yet so far, Julio Borges is the only opposition candidate advocating widespread participation. Perhaps that explains why the relative newcomer is the surprise

frontrunner for the anti-Chavistas. At 36 years old, Borges has a long political career ahead of him. He almost certainly realizes that a good faith campaign this year will position him well for future bids. He is counting on the fact that his countrymen will not look favorably on those willing to sacrifice Venezuelan democracy to score another political point against Chavez. The other potential candidates are nearing the end of their careers, and are not likely to run in 2012.

Here's hoping the others put the greater good of the country before their personal goals.



Another Raw Diehl

*The Washington Post's Chief Anti-Chavez Cheerleader
Is Primed for Elections*

*By Eric Wingerter
Venezuela Information Office*

Anyone looking to keep up to date with the current talking points for the Venezuelan opposition need only follow the writings of Jackson Diehl in the *Washington Post*. As deputy editorial page editor, Diehl drafts the un-bylined editorials about President Hugo Chavez.

When Diehl writes a particularly unsubstantiated column, the *Post* publishes his work on the right-hand side of the opinion page, effectively distancing his rants from the official opinion of the paper.

Over the years, progressive Venezuela watchers have come to regard Jackson Diehl Op-Eds as a sounding board for the urban legends and gossip promoted by Venezuela's well-connected opposition leaders--sort of a Page Six for anti-Chavez innuendo. His columns have given mainstream credence to the ideas that the democratically elected president is actually a dictator, that a media law banning explicit sex on television is an act of political censorship, and that important literacy and health care programs are nothing more than a cynical attempt to buy votes from Venezuela's unwashed masses.

The power of a *Post* editorial is significant, and it is partly due to the work of Mr. Diehl that the storylines above, although easily refuted, have framed the discussion of Venezuela in the U.S. press.

Diehl's propensity for not letting facts get in the way of an anti-Chavez rant often place him at the center of controversy:

- In the lead up to the 2004 recall referendum against Chavez, the Washington think tank Council On Hemispheric Affairs published a paper on the inaccuracies of Diehl's coverage of Venezuela. "Shame on such a senior Washington Post figure," COHA writes, "for dousing Chávez with such flammable fuel – which, if ignited, could further seriously undermine the U.S.' professed intention to

consolidate democracy throughout the hemisphere and destroy what little standing this country has today throughout the region;”¹

- In December of last year, the media watchdog group Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR) took Diehl to task for publishing unsubstantiated rumors about President Chavez’s supposed funding of leftist movements in the hemisphere;² and
- In April 2005, the Venezuela Ministry of Information and Communication was forced to respond to a series of Diehl’s tirades, which painted an “incomplete, cartoonish, and malicious portrait of Venezuelan media and law.”³

But for the Venezuelan elite, eager to promote the latest rumor about the president they despise, a visit to Mr. Diehl’s office has become a cursory agenda item on their U.S. itinerary.

An Election Year Press Strategy

It’s an election year in Venezuela. In other countries, this would be a time for parties and candidates to spend time with hometown crowds, explaining their platform and making optimistic stump speeches. But the Venezuelan opposition long ago abandoned the idea of winning over the hearts and minds of the Venezuelan public (polling results show the most popular opposition candidate unable to break through the 20% popularity mark). Unable to win in an up or down vote, the opposition strategy has been to promote the idea in the international press that the electoral system can’t be trusted.

To this end, the latest storyline involves President Chavez using the courts to intimidate viable opposition candidates. The face of this sordid tale is former Caracas mayor Henrique Capriles Radonski, and the obvious spot to place the story is a Jackson Diehl column. On April 10th, the Post took this storyline for a test run in a piece whose title accuses Chavez of “Locking Up the Vote.”⁴ Described by Mr. Diehl, Capriles is “a slim, handsome and fast talking pol” who just happened to be “in Washington last month to drum up interest in his case.” Diehl doesn’t discuss why a sinister strongmen would let his political prisoner out of the country for a publicity tour.

According to the column, Capriles was an “energetic democrat,” the mayor of an affluent Caracas borough during the 2002 coup d’etat against President Chavez. When opposition leaders stormed the Cuban embassy to attack Chavez’s Vice President, whom the crowd

¹ Birns, Larry, and Mike Scott, “The Washington Post’s Jackson Diehl Strikes Out on Venezuela.” The Council on Hemispheric Affairs, August 11, 2004.
http://www.coha.org/NEW_PRESS_RELEASES/New_Press_Releases_2004/04.49_Venezuela%20Op-Ed%202.htm

² Delacour, Justin, “The Op-Ed Assassination of Hugo Chavez.” *Extra!* December 2005.
<http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/articles.php?artno=1670>

³ Izarra, Andres , Letter to Jackson Diehl, April 2, 2005.
<http://www.vheadline.com/readnews.asp?id=29153>

⁴ Diehl, Jackson, “In Venezuela, Locking Up the Vote,” *The Washington Post*, April 10, 2006.
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/09/AR2006040901102.html>

believed had sought refuge there, Capriles was at the scene. Here the story gets murky: Capriles backers insist he was there in an unsuccessful attempt to diffuse a tense situation, while others claim that he encouraged the mob by keeping his police force at bay. Capriles was eventually charged with not enforcing the law that day and endangering the public, and his trial has gone through a series of appeals.

In Diehl's analysis, the Chavez administration is simply "toying with" Capriles out of political fear, because:

- 1) Capriles "is one of the brightest stars in a new generation of Venezuelan politicians,"
- 2) "He is popular, having won 80 percent of the vote in his district..." and, significantly
- 3) "*Unlike much of the rest of the opposition, he and his First Justice party are unambiguously committed to democracy.*" [my italics]

To his credit, Mr. Diehl has almost conceded a basic and important fact about the vast majority of the Venezuelan opposition. This is a fundamentally anti-democratic movement: they tried every possible illegal means of overthrowing the government, including a U.S.-backed military coup (April 2002) and several oil strikes (one that devastated the economy in 2003). Only after all of these efforts failed did they agree to use the ballot box, attempting to recall the President in August 2004. When they lost overwhelmingly, they refused to accept the results, claiming the referendum was somehow stolen despite the certification of international observers from the OAS and the Carter Center. They then gave up on the ballot box again, boycotting the December 2005 national elections, once again despite the certification of international observers, this time from the OAS and the European Union.

So what about points one and two? To be sure, Capriles is popular within his sphere of influence. But as mayor of Caracas' smallest district, and one of the wealthiest, it's not as if he was cutting into Chavez's political base. A shining star of the opposition? Maybe one day, but in this campaign cycle the big cheese of the Justice First party is 36 year old Julio Borges, the unbrowed wunderkind who is actually running against Chavez for president. Any crafty caudillo running a campaign of intimidation would find better results going after the real competition.

In the end, the Venezuelan courts may indeed find Capriles innocent. But the fact is that the charges against him are serious, and involve one of the most complicated and ugly days in modern Venezuelan history. Jackson Diehl judges the case on the basis of an interview with the defendant, because it matches his preconceived thesis.

The same is true for this item:

Now, with a vote on his tenure coming up, the president's prosecutors are back. First up in court was the election-monitoring group Sumate, which has meticulously documented Chavez's manipulation of the electoral system. The caudillo ordered up the trial of its top leaders on treason charges during his weekly television show two years ago; Maria Corina Machado and Alejandro Plaz have been in and out of court every few months since.

Some corrections: first Sumate is not an election-monitoring group, but as even the anti-Chavez *Miami Herald* reports, an opposition group that, with funding from the United States, led the recall effort⁵. Second, Sumate did not “meticulously document Chavez’ manipulation of the electoral system”, but rather tried to discredit the referendum and the international observers by claiming, on the basis of fraudulent exit polls, that it was stolen⁶. They also encouraged a boycott in December on this basis.

Here is what *Newsday* reported about Maria Corina Machado and her alleged involvement in the military coup:

Asked why she was in the presidential palace hours after the coup, Machado insisted she was only accompanying her mother, who'd wanted to visit her "very good friend" - the wife of coup leader Pedro Carmona.

*As for her signature on the decree suspending or dissolving the Supreme Court, National Assembly and Constitution, Machado claimed she innocently put her name and national identity number on a blank paper she assumed was a reception sheet.*⁷

It may be that her story is completely true. It may also be true that she had no communications with the U.S. government, which funded her, that could be considered conspiring with a foreign power for the purpose of overthrowing the elected government of Venezuela. On the other hand, she may also have committed a serious crime. As with the Capriles case, this is a matter for the courts to decide.

Loading Up the Innuendo

The themes in a Jackson Diehl column are usually just a template for a laundry list of unsubstantiated asides, and “Locking Up” contains more than its fair share. The most outlandish include:

- The idea that “for years” Chavez “has been nursing along prosecutions of politicians, human rights activists, labor leaders, journalists and election

⁵ Bachalet, Pablo, “Rice Bashes Venezuelan Leader, Politics,” *Miami Herald*, February 17, 2006. <http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/world/americas/13893137.htm>

⁶ Jones, Bart, “Divisions Harden after Chavez Victory,” *National Catholic Reporter*, September 8, 2004 <http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/articles.php?artno=1275>

⁷ Jones, Bart. “Venezuela: A Newsday Special Report,” *Newsday*, May 1, 2005. <http://www.newsday.com/news/nationworld/world/ny-wovene034241232may01,0,4533593.story?coll=ny-worldnews-toputility>

monitors.” The statement is unsupported by the reports of any human rights organization. We have already seen what Diehl means by prosecuting the “election monitor” Maria Corina Machado. No one has been prosecuted in Venezuela under Chavez for political offenses.

- The notion that Chavez “has never enjoyed overwhelming support in Venezuela; his ratings has mostly fluctuated a few points above and below 50 percent.” Umkay...Chavez has three times won an election with 60 percent of the vote, a figure that holds steady with most current opposition polling.
- The implication that the president is “rooting” for an opposition boycott. Barring an extreme change in public perceptions, Chavez will handily win the presidency this December. It is clearly in the interests of the administration to have this victory be within the context of an open and competitive race.
- The suggestion that Chavez is immersed in “a tidal wave of corruption revelations.” No specifics are given, of course, but perhaps Mr. Diehl is saving the juicy tidbits for an upcoming tell-all column.

While Jackson Diehl fashions himself as the confidant, crusader and voice of Venezuela’s elite, the Chavistas have a country to run. Although the education and health missions have been a remarkable success, Venezuela’s leaders must continue to work on the chronic problems of reducing poverty and combating crime. And yes, there will be prosecutors who bring charges against the participants of the 2002 coup d’etat. Amidst the gossip and innuendo, bringing these cases to the judicial system is crucial to promoting the rule of law. Even in an election year.



Venezuela from a Venezuelan's perspective: Neither heaven nor hell

For the last seven years, a great majority of Venezuelans, including myself, have defended a new democratic administration being built under Venezuela's new constitution. This is the only constitution in our history that has ever been approved through a popular referendum vote. In fact, today Venezuelans are engaged in the highest amounts of democratic political participation in the hemisphere.

The policies implemented under the President Hugo Chavez's administration have been inclusive by promoting the rights of the marginalized indigenous and African communities, something that has never been done before in Venezuela. One of the most amazing new social policies is the literacy campaign. Brought to fruition through the collaboration of thousands of Venezuelans, illiteracy has been eradicated in less than two years. So many wonderful things are taking place in my country of birth today that I find it hard to understand all of the negative press towards Venezuela that currently exists.

I must also mention that all Venezuelan citizens now have access to free medical attention, something crucial for a nation that is entrenched in such dire poverty. Thanks to Cuban and Venezuelan doctors through the "Barrio Adentro" program, poor Venezuelans now have access to subsidized medical treatment, resulting in the care of more than 10 million citizens in the last three years.

These are just a few of the reasons why I find myself very proud of Venezuela today. Unfortunately I continue to be saddened by the rhetoric of US President George Bush's administration and the US media against my sovereign land. Not only is Venezuela a reliable source of energy for the US and the US's second-largest trading partner in the hemisphere, she is also helping the poor of America. CITGO, a US subsidiary of Venezuela's state-owned oil company PDVSA, has been providing heating oil at a 40% discount to poor communities throughout the US this winter. Focusing on those areas most in need, CITGO has been able to reduce monthly heating bill payments for hard working families by hundreds of dollars, making a real difference for the most marginalized, especially communities of colors.

On that note I find it disheartening to read the anti-Venezuelan resolution H. Con. Res. 328 recently sponsored by Connie Mack, which supports the funding of opposition groups who were involved in the attempted coup against Chavez in 2002. Although the coup was thwarted, these groups dissolved all political powers including the Supreme Court and the constitution and clearly violated the law. The United States was the first and only country to recognize this illegitimate de-facto government and since then has lost a lot of credibility in Latin America.

This is no way to treat an important trading partner regardless of whether or not we agree with all of the policies of their elected president. For sure Venezuela is not perfect, she is neither heaven nor hell, but this does not justify our meddling into the internal affairs of a sovereign nation. Let's give Venezuela the right to determine her own destiny. Let's give Venezuela a break!

[**Edward Mercado** is the communications coordinator at the Venezuela Information Office in Washington. Visit <http://www.veninfo.org>.] From *Green Left Weekly*, April 5, 2006.

Venezuela Offers Energy Stability for the Hemisphere

By Olivia Burlingame Goumbri
Venezuela Information Office

For many months now, energy stability has been a hot topic in Washington. Local government officials, Congressmen, and even the President have raised the issue with as much fervor as they do the “war on terror”, suggesting that securing accessible energy for its citizens is of maximum importance. But recent actions and statements by the Bush Administration signal that this may not be altogether true, especially when stability means working with nations that have chosen a different path to economic development.

Today, just 90 miles south of our southern US border, Caribbean countries are working to support each other’s energy needs by participating in a program initiated by the Venezuelan government. Known as Petrocaribe, this program has for the first time brought affordable energy to the region. Financing costly oil imports is a continuous problem for most Caribbean nations who face higher prices due to oil access coming primarily through international trade, which requires payment of an additional premium.

In response to this, the Venezuelan government established Petrocaribe last year. Specifically, it was set up to ease the energy burden on the Caribbean by eliminating the middleman and directly providing countries with oil at market prices, made affordable through the use of beneficial financing terms. This financing arrangement helps to ensure the energy security of member countries and stimulates their economic and social development. Currently, all Caribbean countries are members of Petrocaribe with the exception of Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago.¹

A significant part of the Venezuelan initiative is aimed at developing the energy infrastructure of the region, diversifying member countries’ energy sources, and increasing efficiency. There are also plans to use the savings produced from the beneficial financing agreements to foster economic and social development in each participating country, creating a viable way to attack poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and inadequate health care.

While this program has been reported on from time to time in the press, what is less well known is the somewhat similar energy assistance that Venezuela has provided to the U.S. despite the Bush administration’s openly hostile attitude toward the Chavez administration.

Hoping to contribute to U.S. energy stability in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez made a series of energy offers to the United

¹ PetroCaribe Summit, http://www.jis.gov.jm/special_sections/summit/ & Venezuela Launches Caribbean Oil Alliance Petrocaribe, <http://www.forbes.com/business/feeds/afx/2005/06/30/afx2117635.html>.

States. In early September of 2005 the Citgo Corporation, the US subsidiary of Venezuela's state owned oil company PDVSA, pledged \$25,000 toward relief efforts and donated another \$1 Million to the American Red Cross. The Venezuelan government also offered two mobile hospital units, each capable of assisting 300 people, 120 specialists in search and rescue operations, 10 water purifying plants, 18 electricity generators, 20 tons of bottled water, and 50 tons of canned food to Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco.² To offset the rising gas prices, Venezuela further offered to infuse the market with two and a half million extra barrels of oil at market price. In the aftermath of the storm, this increase in market supply would decrease prices and make energy affordable again to the region.³

But the Americans rejected the vast majority of these offers, accepting only the market-value oil. And while Venezuela demonstrated that even in a crisis it would be a reliable source of energy for the United States, it was prevented from providing humanitarian assistance to those who direly needed it. This assistance, along with countless other energy agreements that could be initiated if only the Bush administration was willing, no doubt could have saved lives and contributed to our nation's energy stability during a critical time.

Although Venezuela couldn't directly aid the Louisiana poor during this tragedy, it was able to extend its humanitarian efforts to other Americans in need through a discounted heating oil program in the northeast. This program ended up serving more than 150,000 families and many homeless shelters last winter.

With all the political talk these days about reducing energy dependence on the Middle East, finding a viable partner in the hemisphere that we can depend on seems like a logical solution. Venezuela is the answer. Unfortunately to the detriment of the average American, this partnership continues to be impeded by the Bush administration's adversarial relationship with Venezuela and her political and economic aspirations. Just last week, Washington announced that it would assign a "mission manager" to coordinate intelligence gathering on Venezuela and Cuba. Currently only North Korea and Iran have such high-level intelligence managers, signaling that the administration will continue its hostile stance toward the Venezuelan government.⁴

Every nation has the right to pursue its own political and economic path to development even if it differs from the neo-liberal, free trade model touted by Washington. Supported by the vast majority of Venezuelans who have elected

² Venezuela Offers \$1M, Oil, Food and Equipment for U.S. Victims of Hurricane Katrina, <http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/news.php?newsno=1743>

³ Venezuela to Ship an Additional 1M Barrels of Gasoline to U.S. Due to Hurricane, <http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/news.php?newsno=1748>

⁴ Romero, Simon. "Venezuela Says It Seized 4 Spies; U.S. Embassy Denies Knowledge", New York Times, August 21, 2006
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/20/world/americas/20venezuela.html?ref=americas>

President Chavez, Venezuela has chosen a form of direct democracy and endogenous development that best serves its people. Nevertheless, despite the U.S.' unwillingness to respect this sovereign decision, Venezuela continues to offer energy, development, and humanitarian assistance to low-income Americans. In fact, this winter Venezuela plans to provide free eye surgery to needy Americans suffering from cataracts and glaucoma, and will double the amount of discounted heating oil delivered to needy communities throughout the United States.

With Venezuela's presidential elections drawing near in December and all polls showing that Chavez will likely win by a wide margin once more, respecting the will of the Venezuelan people and their democratically elected president is the best way for America to secure energy stability far into the future. If the Bush administration really wants to provide affordable energy for Americans, fostering respectful and cooperative relations with Venezuela must be a priority.

The Case of the Missing Vote (and Voter)

A Look at the Pre-Chavez Electoral System in Venezuela and Recent Reform

By Olivia Burlingame Goumbri

Last year the Chilean polling firm Latinobarometro published results from 20,000 face-to-face interviews in 18 Latin American countries. Venezuelans, more than any other nationality polled, described their government as “totally democratic,” and expressed an optimism in their country’s future that outpaced any other.¹ This response sits in stark contrast to what would have been found just a decade earlier if a similar poll had been conducted. To understand this phenomenon we must take a look at Venezuelan politics before President Chavez came on the scene.

Venezuela has been considered a democracy since its last dictator stepped down in 1958, and unlike other Latin American nations, did not fall under the control of military dictators in the 70’s and 80’s. For this reason, the international community touted Venezuela as a model democracy in the region. But the reality was far more complicated.

The Art of Exclusion and the Case of the Missing Vote

Venezuelan leaders had always favored political stability over actual democratic participation. In order to stave off the rise of “fringe” movements on the left and right, the country’s top centrist parties entered into a power sharing agreement which effectively shut out voices considered extreme from participating in politics. While this arrangement, known as Puntofijismo, helped prevent authoritarian right-wing governments from taking power, it also created an insurmountable barrier for political leaders who spoke on behalf of Venezuela’s impoverished majority.

The results were profound. Elections were run by the two dominant political parties and even the election results were calculated by party officers. The phrase “acta mata voto,” which roughly translates to “the tally sheet trumps the vote,” entered the popular lexicon as party leaders notoriously divided up votes for third parties between themselves. The fact that audits of the elections and voter registry were never performed made fraud even easier. To further complicate things the National Electoral Council (CNE), the body responsible for overseeing the elections, was part of the executive branch and viewed more as a group of party yes men than an independent body of technical experts.

Due to the government’s political and economic allegiance to the elite rather than to the general population, voter disenfranchisement was widespread. Under Puntofijismo voting was time-consuming and difficult for the poor largely because they lacked the resources needed to exercise their rights. To register to vote a

¹ 2005 Latinobarometro Poll Results, <http://www.latinobarometro.org/>

birth certificate was needed, hard to come by unless you were born in a hospital or private clinic, usually located in an urban area. If you were born in a rural part of the country this was even more difficult to obtain because travel to the hospital was usually costly and out of reach for most. This denied the poor their rights as citizens and marginalized their communities from the electoral process altogether.

During this period a small clique of political leaders controlled virtually all of the political power—not to mention the oil wealth—the temptation for corruption was enormous, and most politicians succumbed. The result was an elite political class that passed legislation favoring their colleagues and families, and a rapid decline in participation by average Venezuelans, who understandably assumed that political participation, even voting, was a waste of time.

Civil Unrest Grips the Nation

Things began to change in the late 1980's and early 1990's as oil prices plummeted and thousands of working class Venezuelans fell into deep poverty. As the ruling parties tried to stabilize the economy, they relied heavily on the advice of international lending institutions who were more interested in Venezuelan stock ratings than the lives of the average Venezuelan. At the advice of the International Monetary Fund, the elites stripped away much of the social safety net that poor Venezuelans relied on to survive, and the country plunged into chaos.

Without access to political power, poor Venezuelans took to the streets. One massive riot in Caracas in 1989 was suppressed violently by the government. Although official body counts were never announced, human rights groups estimate that as many as 3,000 Venezuelans were gunned down on the city streets in less than a week, their bodies dumped into mass graves.

This event, known as the *Caracazo*, forced political leaders to re-evaluate their corrupt and grossly inequitable system, if for no other reason than to stop widespread rebellion. Modest democratic reforms were implemented to appease the citizenry, yet by the elections of 1998, not even half of all eligible Venezuelans were registered to vote.

That year, President Chavez swept into office on a rising tide of popular disaffection, becoming Venezuela's first president independent from the ruling parties since the 1950s. His political coalition had campaigned on a platform of voter inclusion, and he encouraged the National Assembly to quickly begin implementing real reforms. In the last six years, tremendous progress has been made, including:

Independent Elections Authorities: The National Elections Council (CNE under its Spanish acronym) became a separate branch of government, equal to the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches, and its decision making board

are now prohibited from membership in any specific political parties. To ensure that the body was not politicized universities and civil society organizations would now participate in the process of nominating directors. To date this new process has produced one of the most technically competent boards ever with the current President having more than ten years of experience in electoral issues and a recognized expert in issues of voter access.

State of the Art Voting Equipment: Venezuela's 1998 Organic Law of Suffrage and Political Participation, passed before President Chavez took office, recognized that one of the nations major problems was fraud and required that elections be conducted with electronic voting machines. In recent years, the newly reformed CNE has worked tirelessly to implement this. The machines, it was thought, would provide a more credible vote count than manual methods because they produced both a paper and electronic trail, which could be easily audited. Electronic voting machines record the votes in real-time, preventing the ballot box stuffing and vote trading of the old days. Shortly after President Chavez became president however, it was suggested that the machines could be used to violate voter privacy and commit fraud. Some of the Venezuelan government's harshest critics have noted however, that the trail produced by the machines guarantees Venezuelans a greater degree of security in their electoral process than many citizens of the United States. Florida Senator Bill Nelson, in a recent hearing on Venezuela, remarked that "the State of Florida is not even doing that with a paper trail. So maybe Venezuela will teach Florida something."²

Universal Suffrage: The government has implemented a massive voter enfranchisement push known as "Mision Identidad" or "Identity Mission". This program is essentially a widespread citizenship and get out the vote campaign rolled into one. Millions of poor Venezuelans previously lacked official identification in the form of a birth certificate or national ID card, which prevented them from registering to vote. Through the use of 84 regional offices and 7 mobile units, Mision Identidad has been able to provide and renew ID cards for more than 18 and a half million Venezuelans in less than three years.

These reforms have seen dramatic results. In the presidential elections of 2000, only 11 million Venezuelans were registered to vote, and slightly over half of registered voters exercised their right. By the 2004 recall referendum, 14 million were registered and 9 million participated in the vote, dropping the abstention rate from 43.6% to 30.1% in 2004.³

These far-reaching reforms, carried out with the support of the Chavez administration, have enabled all Venezuelans to actively participate in the electoral and political life of their nation for the first time in history. Currently more than half of Venezuela's 26 million citizens are registered to vote and many

² Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Hearing on Venezuela, June 24, 2004.

³ Venezuelan National Electoral Council web page, <http://cne.gob.ve/>

more are officially recognized as citizens. It is easy to see why polls reflect Venezuelan enthusiasm in their democracy in such high numbers. After forty years of corruption and poverty, it seems that the case of the missing vote (and voter) has finally been solved.

Olivia Burlingame Goumbri is the editor of *The Venezuela Reader: The Building of a People's Democracy* published by EPICA Books in 2005.

Part IV: Internet Information

Date: Thu, 9 Mar 2006 15:26:55 -0500

From: Venezuela News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>

To: eric@veninfo.org

Subject: State Department Report on Vzla, Mack Resolution Gains Traction

State Department Releases Vzla Human Rights Report

On Wednesday, March 8th, the U.S. State Department released its annual country-by-country report on human rights problems in various countries, including Venezuela.

The Venezuela section includes some criticisms, particularly in the area of Venezuelan prisons, which have been chronically troubled for generations. Ironically, the two areas in which Venezuela was singled out for criticism were in the treatment of prisoners and in the use of wiretaps without a warrant—the same problems that have brought domestic and international criticism to the United States in recent months.

On the positive side, the State Department report acknowledges Venezuela's commitment to freedom in a number of areas, recognizing:

- * The Venezuelan press and electronic media are independent and free,
- * Freedom of assembly and speech are respected, and
- * Elections are free, fair, and "held on the basis of universal suffrage."

[Click here](#) to read more positive statements from the State Department report on Venezuela.

Despite the State Department Report, Mack Resolution Moving Forward

Unfortunately, the positive messages from the State Department have not yet permeated Capitol Hill. Representative Connie Mack's H. Con. Res. 328 is still being circulated in the House of Representatives. Just this week, Rep. Mack (R-FL) has circulated a "Dear Colleague" letter asking his allies on the Hill to co-sponsor this error-packed resolution.

As we reported last month, H. Con. Res. 328 requests an increase in U.S. funding for Venezuela's opposition parties, and includes a series of erroneous "whereas" clauses that show a profound lack of understanding about Venezuela's democracy. That's shouldn't be a surprise. Just last July, Congressman Mack made the following off-the-wall claim:

"In Hugo Chavez's Venezuela there is no free press, just state controlled anti-American propaganda. There is no freedom of speech, no freedom of dissent, and no freedom to stand in opposition to the Chavez regime."

Clearly Mack has not read the Venezuelan press, which has vigorously opposed President Chavez. What's more, Mack is directly contradicting the findings of the U.S. State Department. This distortion of truth in H. Con. Res. 328 makes it one of the most intellectually dishonest pieces of legislation currently up for review in Congress.

How You Can Help: Ask Your Rep. to Stand Up For "One Minute of Truth."

Members of the House are granted one minute each morning to speak out on any subject. In the weeks ahead, members should be asked to exercise their "one minute" to speak out against at least one of the erroneous statements in Representative Mack's H. Con. Res. 328.

[Click Here](#) to send a fax to your representative right away, and encourage them to stand up against this dishonest campaign. Or to call, dial the Congressional switchboard and ask to be transferred to your member at 202-224-3121.

NOTE: The Venezuela Information Office is dedicated to informing the American public about contemporary Venezuela, and receives its funding from the government of Venezuela. More information is available from the FARA office of the Department of Justice in Washington DC.

Date: Mon, 13 Mar 2006 11:12:21 -0500 (EST)
From: Venezuela News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: H. Con. Res. 328 Comes Up for a Vote This Thursday!

H. Con. Res. 328 will be voted on this week! Your calls are needed in Congress today

Congressional Switchboard: 202-224-3121

Friends,

We just received word that H. Con. Resolution 328 will be up for a subcommittee vote this Thursday, March 16. Your help is needed to stop this intellectually dishonest, anti-Venezuela resolution. **Please call Congress today!**

What is H.Con. Res. 328?

Sponsored by Rep. Connie Mack (R-FL), H. Con. Res. 328 is a misguided and factually inaccurate resolution that condemns Venezuela and recommends funding of Venezuelan opposition parties, in direct violation of Venezuelan law.

The resolution contains so many factual inaccuracies that it should be an embarrassment for most members of Congress to support. For a full description of the errors, half-truths and misstatements please see our fact sheet.

What you can do:

Please call Representative Eliot Engel today. This New York Democrat is the ranking member of the House Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, which will be taking up the vote. The Congressional Switchboard can patch you through to his office. Call **202-224-3121** today and do the following:

- 1) Ask to speak to Congressman Eliot Engel's Office
- 2) When the receptionist answers, ask to speak to the Legislative Aide who works on Venezuela issues.
- 3) If you speak to the aide directly, ask him/her to recommend that Rep. Engel speak out against H. Con. Res. 328 in the subcommittee. If you are put into voicemail, please leave a message. Here are some points to consider for your discussion:

* **The resolution is inaccurate.** Among other things:

-The resolution states that President Chavez rewrote the Venezuelan Constitution, when in fact it was drafted and approved through a democratic process;

-It argues that President Chavez has taken control of the National Assembly, when in fact opposition parties made a decision not to participate in the most recent elections;

-It contradicts the 2005 U.S. State Department report that Venezuela has a open and vigorous media; and

-It claims that President Chavez "is supporting radical forces" in Bolivia and Colombia. The inclusion of Bolivia seems to be referring to the democratically-elected president of that country, Evo Morales, who, while a socialist, is supported and recognized by every country in Latin America. And the Colombia example refers to never-proven allegations of links to FARC rebels--a charge which is not even supported by the conservative President of Colombia, Alvaro Uribe.

* **The U.S. must have a sane policy toward Venezuela.** Last month, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld compared President Chavez to Hitler. Just last week, a California academic was harassed by FBI agents for his support of Venezuela's democratically-elected government. Clearly, the House needs bring a level of sanity back to our discussion of Venezuela.

* If we truly believe in the principles of democracy, the **U.S. should not be advocating funding for opposition parties in other countries.**

NOTE: Rep. Engel is new to the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee. He will likely vote the right way on this bill, but he needs to be educated in order to be able to speak out against H. Con. Res. 328.

4) **Forward this message on to five friends** and ask them to make a similar call.

5) **Post this message on listservs** that you belong to and get the word out!

NOTE: The Venezuela Information Office is dedicated to informing the American public about contemporary Venezuela, and receives its funding from the government of Venezuela. More information is available from the FARA office of the Department of Justice in Washington DC.

Date: Thu, 23 Mar 2006 10:41:37 -0500 (EST)
From: Venezuela Information Office <VIO@democracyinaction.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: Mack is Back!

MAKE A CALL FOR TRUTH!

H. Con. Res. 328 may come up for a vote as early as next week! While you successfully stopped Rep. Connie Mack's (R-FL) initial call for support of his resolution in the Western Hemisphere's Subcommittee two weeks ago we believe that it will be introduced for a mark up again this coming week. If passed it will then go to the full House Committee on International Relations for a vote and then to the entire House of Representatives. While this legislation is not binding it signifies the "opinion" of the Congress and can be used in the future to justify interventionist action against Venezuela.

H. Con. Res. 328 is filled with distortions and misleading statements that add up to paint an inaccurate picture of Venezuela's government. Help us stop this resolution dead in its tracks!

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

Ask your Representative to vote NO on the Mack Resolution-H. Con. Res. 328! Today, Friday and early next week members should hear from you and know that you do not support H. Con. Res. 328 and the funding for opposition groups in Venezuela that it sanctions.

Contact your representative by calling the Congressional switchboard at: 202-224-3121.

Ask to be connected to your representative and tell that they should not be associated with a bill that is so factually inaccurate and void of any credible research.

*Below you will find helpful information that will help you as you talk with your representative as well as Mack's actual dear colleague letter.

The Mack resolution is laced with so many inaccuracies and misleading statements, it is simply breathtaking. A myth/ fact sheet on the resolution along with the actual resolution is available for your study at: <http://www.rethinkvenezuela.com/downloads/hcr328.htm>

In consideration of Rep. Mack's request to co-sponsor his resolution, it is helpful perhaps to recall that Rep. Mack said on July 14th of 2005 that there was no freedom of expression in Venezuela. None! In a speech given on the floor of the House of Representatives on July 14, 2005 by Rep. Connie Mack he said: "In Hugo Chavez's Venezuela there is no free press just state controlled Anti-American, anti-American propaganda. There is no freedom of speech, no freedom of dissent, and no freedom to stand in opposition to the Chavez regime. "

Rep. Mack's statement is stunning in its falsity. This is easily shown by simply reading any recent articles from El Universal, a Venezuelan daily newspaper, which condemns the Venezuelan Government daily on any array of topics.

This distortion of truth in H. Con. Res. 328 makes it one of the most intellectually dishonest pieces of legislation currently up for review in Congress.

Below you will find Mack's request for co-sponsorship:

March 8, 2006

**Support Freedom in Venezuela
Co-Sponsor H. Con. Res. 328**

Dear Colleague:

While freedom is on the march in many places around the world, a resurgence of socialist, communist, and anti-freedom governments and movements in Latin America represent an emerging threat to freedom throughout the region.

In Venezuela, socialist President Hugo Chavez is using state-owned oil money to underwrite his increasing control of the Venezuelan people and to back his growing alliances with leftist leaders and causes throughout Latin America.

In September, Chavez—with Fidel Castro by his side—was clear in his motives: "Fidel, I think you were always right: It's socialism or death." And in separate announcements late last year, the Chavez government said it would begin taking political control over private banks, confiscating large parcels of private property, and seizing private oil fields if companies didn't convert operating contracts to "joint ventures" in which the government would assume a majority shareholder stake.

Finally, members of the media, human rights defenders, and leaders of opposition groups like Sumate are facing prosecution under a judicial system where the nation's courts have been packed with Chavez cronies. And there is increasing evidence that the government of Venezuela is seeking to destabilize the region and dismantle the institutions of democracy within its borders and beyond them. In fact, in recent weeks, Chavez and Castro have begun reaching out to known Islamic terrorist organizations, such as Hamas, and cozying-up to renowned terrorist-sponsoring nations like Iran and North Korea.

The United States must make clear that improved relations between the United States and Venezuela depend upon the government of Venezuela demonstrating a commitment to the ideals of freedom and democracy for all of its citizens.

Please co-sponsor H. Con. Res. 328 and join us in sending a strong message to the government of Venezuela that the people of the United States are firmly committed to freedom and democracy for all citizens of Venezuela.

To cosponsor H. Con. Res. 328, please contact Francis Gibbs in Congressman Mack's office at francis.gibbs@mail.house.gov or 5-2536.

Sincerely,

CONNIE MACK
Member of Congress

DAN BURTON
Member of Congress

NOTE: The Venezuela Information Office is dedicated to informing the American public about contemporary Venezuela, and receives its funding from the government of Venezuela. More information is available from the FARA office of the Department of Justice in Washington DC.

Date: Thu, 23 Mar 2006 14:15:40 -0500 (EST)
From: Venezuela Information Office <VIO@democracyinaction.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: Venezuela: Neither Heaven nor Hell

Dear friends,

It's time to increase our pressure! As you know H. Con. Res. 328, an anti-Venezuelan resolution will probably be marked up in the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs next week. It will then go to the entire International Relations Committee in the house and then to a full house vote.

Write a letter to your local newspaper! Let's get people talking about Venezuela!

To write your letter and find a sample letter go to

http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationsORG/VIO/pickMedia.jsp?letter_KEY=404
that you can use as a guide. After you review the letter you will be guided to pick your state and then click on the newspaper that you'd like to send your letter to (a list of newspapers will appear at the bottom of the page under the sample letter). Your letter will go to the editor to be published in the op-ed section of the paper. You will also find talking points once you select your state that you can use to compose your own personalized letter. Remember your personal story is the most compelling!

Please let us know if your letter gets published by emailing our communications coordinator Edward Mercado at edward@veninfo.org

NOTE: The Venezuela Information Office is dedicated to informing the American public about contemporary Venezuela, and receives its funding from the government of Venezuela. More information is available from the FARA office of the Department of Justice in Washington DC.

To: edward@veninfo.org
From: "Olivia B. Goumbri" <olivia@veninfo.org>
Subject: invitation for rapid response
Cc:
Bcc:
Attached:

Dear Colleagues,

In the last few weeks we've witnessed an increase in negative press towards Venezuela. As we approach the Venezuelan presidential elections scheduled for December of this year, signs that point towards new meddling into the internal affairs of Venezuela are starting to appear. With increased funding for the opposition from the National Endowment for Democracy and the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) plus recent unsubstantiated allegations that the Chavez administration is tampering with voting systems, the need for honest and truthful reporting on Venezuela is critical.

With your help, it is our hope that in the coming months we can make a difference for Venezuela! Positive opinion pieces (op eds) on Venezuela and letters to the editor are paramount right now in order to combat the lies and half-truths that currently qualify as news.

Join our Rapid Response Media Team!

Each Monday we will have identified local and national newspaper stories that need a response or clarification.

If you are willing to write a response to an article, sign on to an already written letter to the editor, or submit an op ed please join our team!

Our aim is to have enough responses to bad press in a timely manner that local and national reporters feel compelled to present a more balanced view of Venezuela in their papers.

If you are interested please email us with your name, email address, and phone number.

Sincerely,
Edward Mercado and Olivia B. Goumbri
Local and Alternative Media Team

Olivia B. Goumbri
Government Relations Specialist
Venezuela Information Office
2000 P Street, NW Suite 240
Washington, DC 20036
t. 202-347-8081 x. 602
f. 202-347-8091

Date: Thu, 13 Apr 2006 13:02:16 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: Today is the Anniversary of the Venezuela Counter-Coup

Friends,

Today marks the fourth anniversary of the end of the coup against Venezuela's Hugo Chavez. On April 13, 2002, hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans rose up and demanded the return of their democratically-elected President, after a bizarre 2-day series of events which pitted the country's business elite, along with corrupt union bosses and select members of the Venezuelan military against the principals of democracy. Eighteen Venezuelans were killed, and more than a hundred were injured.

The coup would never have taken place without the support of Venezuela's highly consolidated private media. For weeks before the takeover, television anchors signed off their broadcasts with calls for Chavez to resign; reporters urged viewers take to the streets of Caracas, even though this was a set up for a bloody confrontation many knew was pre-planned as part of the destabilization attempt.

As we honor the heroic struggle to restore democracy and rule of law to Venezuela, North Americans must recommit ourselves to challenging the media in our own country that provides distorted information about the events of four years ago and the story of Venezuela today.

In just seven months, Venezuela will hold yet another Presidential election. According to polls from the government, from the opposition, and from independent firms Chavez will easily win re-election. But in the months ahead we will all read slanted stories in our local newspapers attempting to discredit President Chavez and undermine the legitimacy of his re-election. This is a campaign. We need you to help participate in our own version of Venezuela's counter coup.

What You Can Do: Start With the Washington Post

The first volley in this stepped-up disinformation campaign was launched earlier this week, as Washington Post editor Jackson Diehl published a column, titled "In Venezuela, Locking up the Vote,"

where he accuses the Chavez administration of systematically targeting political opponents with jail. Click [here](#) to read more about Mr. Diehl and this particular column.

Storylines like these, left unchallenged, will shape the U.S. public and policymakers' perceptions of what is happening in Venezuela.. Today, in honor of those who continue the struggle to preserve democracy in Venezuela, please take 10 minutes to respond. Letters to the Washington Post may be sent to: [**letters@washpost.com**](mailto:letters@washpost.com), and should be limited to 150 words.

Here are just a few of the false allegations that Diehl makes:

* He claims that "for years" Chavez "has been nursing along prosecutions of politicians, human rights activists, labor leaders, journalists and election monitors." The statement is unsupported by the reports of any human rights organization. No one has been prosecuted in Venezuela under Chavez for political offenses.

* He argues that Chavez "has never enjoyed overwhelming support in Venezuela; his ratings have mostly fluctuated a few points above and below 50 percent." The reality is that Chavez has three times won an election with 60 percent of the vote, and current polling places his popularity even higher today.

* He implies that president is "rooting" for the opposition to boycott the election. The truth is that Chavez will handily win the presidency this December regardless of the actions taken by the opposition. It is clearly in the interests of the administration to have this victory be within the context of an open and competitive race.

* He suggests that Chavez is immersed in "a tidal wave of corruption revelations." No specifics are given to back this up, but Mr. Diehl is well aware that it is enough to simply float the rumor in a paper with the reputation of the Washington Post, and the perception will become reality.

There are many more false claims in Mr. Diehl's piece. Please take the time to read his editorial and our response, and to write a letter from the heart.

For tips on writing an effective letter to the editor, please [click here](#).

NOTE: The Venezuela Information Office is dedicated to informing the American public about contemporary Venezuela, and receives its funding from the government of Venezuela. More information is available from the FARA office of the Department of Justice in Washington DC.

Date: Thu, 20 Apr 2006 18:10:16 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: Radio Marti in Venezuela? Your Help Needed!

YOUR RESPONSE NEEDED:
WASHINGTON TIMES OP-ED MISREPRESENTS VENEZUELA'S MEDIA

The Washington Times this week has published yet another distorted account of the media climate in Venezuela. This time around, they have selected a writer who makes no secret about her political partiality.

Blanquita Cullum is a member of Broadcasting Board of Governors, the outfit that brings the official U.S. spin to the news via Voice of America and Radio Marti. Cullum's thesis --a bit self-serving--is that the Bush Administration should finance her organization to broadcast the U.S. side of the story to presumably information-starved Venezuelans five days a week.

Either Cullum is unaware of the media world in Venezuela, where the vast majority of the television news networks are stridently anti-Chavez, or she simply trying to present that perception to her readers.

* Cullum claims that Venezuela's Law of Social Responsibility, which prohibits explicit sex and violence on television during family hours, would interfere with news broadcasts that report on violent acts. The fact is that news programs are specifically exempt from this law.

* She cites the case of a "medical examiner" who is "now serving a five-year prison sentence for violating one of the new restrictive [media] laws." The case she seems to be referring to involved a military trial for perjury, which has nothing to do with a media law in Venezuela.

* She implies that laws requiring that a percentage of radio airtime be set aside for Venezuelan artists somehow violate free expression. The fact is that most countries, including much of Europe, and even Canada, have similar requirements.

All told, Cullum severely misrepresents the media environment in Venezuela. She even mistranslates the name of a media law she claims to be an expert on (ReSoRTe is a Spanish acronym for "Social Responsibility in Radio and Television," not the word for "rebound").

But her intended storyline, of a Venezuela without a free and independent media, has made it into the public sphere.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:
You can help set the record straight with a letter to the Washington Times pointing out her distortions. Letters to the Times may be sent here and should be less than 200 words in length.

FROM FOOT SOLDIER TO DICTATOR IN JUST TWO YEARS!
Our friends at SOA Watch have put together a terrific flash animation about the notorious school for Latin American tyrants.

DELEGATIONS TO VENEZUELA
There are many opportunities to see Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution up close and personal this year. Please visit our updated list to find one that meets your interests.

NOTE: The Venezuela Information Office is dedicated to informing the American public about contemporary Venezuela, and receives its funding from the government of Venezuela. More information is available from the FARA office of the Department of Justice in Washington DC.

Date: Fri, 28 Apr 2006 11:59:40 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: Posada Applies for U.S. Citizenship, U.S. Heating Oil Reps Meet with Chavez

ACCUSED TERRORIST APPLIES FOR U.S.CITIZENSHIP

How goes the war on terror? In the U.S. the answer seems to depend on just who is being terrorized. This week Cuban-born Luis Posada Carrilles officially applied for U.S. citizenship. Posada has been charged with a number of terrorist activities in Venezuela and Cuba, including blowing up a civilian airliner in 1976, which killed 73 people including members of Cuba's Olympic Fencing Team. He escaped from a Venezuelan prison in 1985 as he was awaiting trial.

Posada, who has worked for the CIA, successfully fought Venezuela's extradition request last year when a judge ruled that he may be mistreated in a Venezuelan prison. Posada's alleged accomplices in the bombings, Orlando Bosch, gave a chilling interview on Miami's Chanel 41 earlier this month, where he explained how the Cuban athletes had brought the bombing on themselves by representing their country, and therefore "the tyrant," referring to Fidel Castro.

CITGO HEATING OIL RECIPIENTS THANK CHAVEZ

Last weekend, more than sixty beneficiaries of Citgo's home heating oil assistance program traveled to Caracas to meet the people who had helped them keep warm this winter. The delegation, made up of recipients from six U.S. states and four Native tribes, met with government officials, indigenous leaders, and participants in Venezuela's renowned social missions.

The visit culminated in a three-hour meeting with President Chavez to discuss the oil program. The president pledged to extend and expand the heating oil program next winter, with a portion of the profits going back to the U.S. communities. Philadelphia recipient and single mother Donna Santiago told President Chavez, "In times of desperation, God sends us an angel. And you, President Chavez, are our angel."

See related stories from the Boston Globe and the Bangor Daily News.

MACK WATCH

Florida Republican Connie Mack continued his ongoing tirade against the Venezuelan government this week. In a statement on the House floor, Mack claimed that in Venezuela, "freedom of expression is under siege" and "human rights and fundamental freedoms are under threat"—statements that anyone with a passing knowledge of Venezuela know not to be true.

Mack's statement may be a signal that he may soon reintroduce his legislation, H.Con.Res. 328, which advocates U.S. financing of opposition parties in Venezuela. You may remember that you helped defeat the resolution two months ago, when your phone calls and faxes dominated Capitol Hill. However, H.Con.Res.328 could be reintroduced at any time. We will keep you up to date with the latest.

Click here for the myths and facts behind H. Con. Res. 328. Congressman Mack may be reached via his website.

AIRLINES VICTORY FOR VENEZUELA

Good news for those traveling to Venezuela this year: the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration upgraded the safety rating of Venezuela's airport to category 1, ending a two month standoff between the governments.

In the last 10 years, Venezuelan authorities had made a number of improvements to airport and airline safety, but the FAA had refused to re-evaluate their designation, forcing limitations on flights between the U.S. and Caracas. Earlier this year, Venezuela had threatened to further restrict flights between the countries unless the FAA re-evaluated their designation. [Read more here.](#)

NOTE: The Venezuela Information Office is dedicated to informing the American public about contemporary Venezuela, and receives its funding from the government of Venezuela. More information is available from the FARA office of the Department of Justice in Washington DC.

Date: Fri, 28 Apr 2006 12:34:55 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: Posada Applies for U.S. Citizenship, U.S. Heating Oil Reps Meet with Chavez

ACCUSED TERRORIST APPLIES FOR U.S. CITIZENSHIP

How does the war on terror? In the U.S. the answer seems to depend on just who is being terrorized. This week Cuban-born Luis Posada Carrilles officially applied for U.S. citizenship. Posada has been charged with a number of terrorist activities in Venezuela and Cuba, including blowing up a civilian airliner in 1976, which killed 73 people including members of Cuba's Olympic Fencing Team. He escaped from a Venezuelan prison in 1985 as he was awaiting trial.

Posada, who has worked for the CIA, successfully fought Venezuela's extradition request last year when a judge ruled that he may be mistreated in a Venezuelan prison. Posada's alleged accomplice in the bombings, Orlando Bosch, gave a chilling interview on Miami's Chanel 41 earlier this month, where he explained how the Cuban athletes had brought the bombing on themselves by representing their country, and therefore "the tyrant," referring to Fidel Castro.

CITGO HEATING OIL RECIPIENTS THANK CHAVEZ

Last weekend, more than sixty beneficiaries of Citgo's home heating oil assistance program traveled to Caracas to meet the people who had helped them keep warm this winter. The delegation, made up of recipients from six U.S. states and four Native tribes, met with government officials, indigenous leaders, and participants in Venezuela's renowned social missions.

The visit culminated in a three-hour meeting with President Chavez to discuss the oil program. The president pledged to extend and expand the heating oil program next winter, with a portion of the profits going back to the U.S. communities. Philadelphia recipient and single mother Donna Santiago told President Chavez, "In times of desperation, God sends us an angel. And you, President Chavez, are our angel."

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Date: Fri, 5 May 2006 15:21:27 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: Venezuela & Drugs, National District Lobby Week

VENEZUELA & DRUGS

The Venezuela buzz on Capitol Hill this week involves the country's efforts to stem narcotics trafficking. Three weeks ago, an airplane carrying 5 ½ tons of cocaine was intercepted in Mexico. The flight had originated in Venezuela, although various sources dispute whether it had made an additional stop before it reached Mexico. Some members of Congress are using the huge bust as an excuse to bash Venezuela for its supposed "lack of cooperation" with the United States on anti-drug initiatives.

Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN), who chairs the Subcommittee on Western Hemispheric Affairs, may soon introduce a resolution to condemn Venezuela for its "lack of cooperation" in the war on drugs. While Rep. Burton uses the Mexican cocaine seizure as the premise for his resolution, he neglects to mention a key fact: According to the Associated Press, the bust was brought about by a tip from Venezuelan authorities.

Clearly, Venezuela has been serious in its efforts to combat drug trafficking, yet some members of Congress are cherry-picking facts to fit their agenda.

VENEZUELA DISTRICT LOBBY WEEK

May 29-June 2, 2006

At the end of this month, Members of Congress will return home for an entire week to meet with constituents. The district work period is an ideal time to set up a meeting with your representatives to talk about Venezuela.

WHY ME?

With Venezuela's presidential elections coming up at the end of this year, opposition groups are already working on Capitol Hill to gather funding and support for their efforts. As we have already seen, they often rely on half-truths and outright deception to characterize Venezuela as an undemocratic nation. They have been successful. Most members of Congress have only heard one side of the story—a side that reflects the viewpoint of a small, but well-connected, group of people. Meetings with constituents like you can help set the record straight and change the course of U.S. foreign policy toward Venezuela.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A FOREIGN POLICY EXPERT TO PARTICIPATE

Chances are, your representative doesn't know much about Venezuela. For those of you have been following the course of Venezuela's democracy on this listserv and in the news, you are probably much better informed than your Representative is. If you have traveled to Venezuela, you have an important firsthand account to share. ***We are also available to help if you have any questions.***

SETTING UP A MEETING WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

The first step is to schedule an appointment with your representative. Click [here](#) to send a fax requesting an appointment. You can personalize your letter with specific information, or simply use the standard language provided. **BE SURE TO CLICK THE FAX OPTION** before sending, as Emails are often overlooked in busy Congressional offices.

WHAT TO TALK ABOUT

As we said, you don't need to be an expert to talk to your member about Venezuela. But you should be ready with some basic information. We have plenty of information and downloadable handouts on our website. Feel free to contact us with additional questions. Just email Olivia (at) veninfo.org

[Click here for a brief overview of important topics regarding Venezuela's democracy.](#)

[Click here for our entire list of downloadable handouts.](#)

[Click here for more helpful hints on meeting with your Representatives](#)

Again, don't hesitate to contact us with additional questions: Olivia (at) veninfo.org

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Date: Tue, 9 May 2006 10:18:24 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela Information Office <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: Urgent: A Second Anti-Venezuela Resolution to be Introduced Tomorrow!

**URGENT: A Second Anti-Venezuela Resolution to be Introduced Tomorrow in the House.
Please contact your representative today!**

This Wednesday, Congressman Dan Burton (R-IN) intends to introduce a resolution in the House condemning Venezuela for supposedly not cooperating with the United States in the fight against narco- trafficking. Much like Connie Mack's Anti-Venezuela resolution, which was introduced earlier this year, the Burton Resolution is also filled with distorted facts and half truths that paint an inaccurate picture of the situation (more details below).

What You Can Do:

Please contact your House representative today! There are three ways to help:

- 1) Click [here](#) to send a letter to your representative. If you are not sure who your representative is, it's ok! Our software will automatically identify your representative based on your home zip code.
- 2) Call your Representative to tell him/her that this ill-conceived legislation is filled with inaccuracies and will do nothing to improve U.S. Venezuela relations. The Congressional Switchboard can patch you through. Just call 202-224-3121.
- 3) Share this alert with your friends and colleagues. Please pass it on far and wide.

Last March, your faxes and phone calls convinced Rep. Mack to pull his anti-Venezuela legislation. ***We need your help again***, because the stakes could be even higher.

What the Burton Resolution Says:

The resolution argues that Venezuela is not doing enough to combat drug trafficking. While it is non-binding, the strategy is to create a public record of condemnation that may be used to ***justify more direct measures against Venezuela*** in the future. Like the Mack Resolution, it is another tool to discredit the Venezuelan government during an election year and even to justify intervention. Also like the Mack Resolution, it is based on some conspicuously bad information:

- 1) The Burton Resolution claims that drug trafficking "significantly increased" in Venezuela last year. In reality, Venezuelan drug seizures were on the increase, meaning that enforcement was way up, not an increase in trafficking.
- 2) The resolution cites a high-profile case of an airplane filled with cocaine that was seized in Mexico last month as an example of Venezuela's supposed lack of enforcement. The implication simply ignores the fact that tips from Venezuelan officials led to seizure in the first place.
- 3) The resolution claims that the Venezuelan government does not publicize its drug seizure statistics, which is simply a false statement.

There are many more distorted facts in the resolution. To see the rest, check out our fact sheet [here](#).

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Date: Fri, 19 May 2006 10:15:06 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela Weekly News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: Burton Resolution and Arms Embargo on Venezuela

Burton Resolution Introduced

Thanks to the hundreds of you who responded last week to Representative Dan Burton's anti-Venezuela resolution. While it did eventually get introduced, only one Democrat ended up signing on as an original cosponsor: Rep. Jim Davis of...you guessed it...Florida. Congressman Davis is not even a member of the House International Relations Committee.

This lack of support--even among those who do not necessarily support Venezuela--is a testament to the vigilance of Venezuela backers in the United States who pointed out, in your phone calls and letters, the resolution's many factual errors. Click [here](#) to read a listing of the resolution's most egregious misstatements.

In all, only 23 House members signed on as original sponsors of the legislation. We will continue to keep you updated. Again, thanks to all who took action to support the truth about Venezuela.

Arms Embargo Against Venezuela

Last Monday, the U.S. State Department took the unusual step of imposing sanctions on arms sales to Venezuela. The move was bizarre, given that of all the nations on whom the U.S. has imposed an arms ban, Venezuela is the only one that has not been designated by the U.S. as a state sponsor of terrorism. The Department's official reason was that Venezuela has somehow not been cooperative in the war on terror.

Like other State Department claims about Venezuela, this one is simply not borne out by the facts. Click on the link to see a fact sheet on Venezuela and its efforts to fight terrorism and drugs.

In reality, the embargo will have little tangible effect on Venezuela, but it is the latest in a near-constant onslaught of Bush Administration policies aimed at marginalizing Venezuela on the world stage, and will provide fodder for future resolutions, like those from Dan Burton and Connie Mack, to imply that Venezuela has links to terrorism.

Read Venezuelan Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez's response to the embargo, published in today's Los Angeles Times, [here](#):

A Light From the U.K.

Happily, leaders in other countries are calling the bluff of the Bush Administration and its policy toward Venezuela. In a remarkable Op-Ed published in the Guardian earlier this week, London Mayor Ken Livingstone writes that Venezuela's government "deserves the unequivocal support of not only every supporter of social progress but every genuine believer in democracy in the world," and argues that "George Bush's refusal to respect the choices of the Venezuelan people shows that his administration has no real interest in promoting democracy at all."

Refreshing words from a world leader. Read Mayor Livingstone's entire piece [here](#).

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Date: Fri, 26 May 2006 13:30:11 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: Venezuelan Poverty Rate Drops Dramatically

Think Tank: Venezuelan Poverty Rate Drops Dramatically

The Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) this week released a new report on Venezuela's poverty rates. The research team found a marked decrease in poverty over the course of President Chavez' term. While in 1998, the year Chavez was first elected, more than 55% of the Venezuelan public lived below the poverty line, today less than 44% do. And that's just an analysis of cash income. When you take into account that the poorest Venezuelans spend far less money on health care, nutrition and education today because of the social missions, the number drops to 35%. In all, a 20% drop in poverty can be calculated in recent years.

Yet many newspaper accounts still claim the opposite. As CEPR discovered, reporters continue to use figures from the first half of 2004, when Venezuela's economy was reeling from the petroleum industry shutdown, led by oil executives in a failed attempt to drive Chavez from office. In other words, reporters are using two year old data from the worst economic period of Chavez' term in order to make the case that the economy remains in bad shape. CEPR presents a number of recent examples, including:

* A January 2006 Editorial in the *Washington Post*, which reads, "In Venezuela, poverty rose from 43 to 53 percent during Mr. Chavez's first six [sic] years in office."

* A report in *Foreign Affairs* magazine that states, "Venezuela's poverty figures and human development indices have deteriorated since 1999, when Chávez took office;" and

* A similar story in *Foreign Policy* last January, claiming that "Chavez has failed to improve any meaningful measure of poverty, education, or equity."

Each of these pieces were written long after the 2005 numbers were available.

Please take the time to read the CEPR report, either in HTML or PDF format, and be sure use it to respond to future press stories on Venezuela's economy.

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Date: Thu, 8 Jun 2006 14:24:36 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela Weekly News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: Venezuela 'Meddling' Stories Based on False Accusations

Garcia Wins Peruvian Presidency

Alan Garcia won Peru's presidential election last Sunday, after campaigning to be a counterbalance to President Chavez's influence in the region. In the weeks leading up to the vote, Chavez and Venezuela's supposed "meddling" became a major theme in the election.

Particularly harmful were accusations that Venezuela had been secretly funneling money to the campaign of Garcia opponent Ollanta Humala. It turns out, however, that these stories, which inflamed the Peruvian press, were based largely on the testimony of one man, Moisés Boyer, who has been discredited in the past for fabricating his background to make similar false testimony in other countries.

Fraudulent Allegations

In 2003, Boyer claimed to have evidence that Venezuela was sending money to leftist guerilla groups in Colombia. In an interview with the Bogotá-based newspaper *El Espectador*, Boyer claimed to be the pilot of a plane that flew an Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) commander into Venezuela on orders from Venezuela's Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel. But the story wasn't true. Boyer had lied about his background and the events of the story. In a remarkable retraction published on August 12, 2003, *El Espectador* said it had been "deceived by Moises Roberto Boyer Riobueno," maintaining that the newspaper now felt "the conviction that the interviewee lied to us." The newspaper apologized to its readers for giving credibility to Boyer's story. Boyer was eventually deported from Colombia and has lived in Trijillo, Peru ever since.

This time around, Boyer identified himself as a member of the Venezuelan military, an impossible feat for a man who had left Venezuela years earlier. Unfortunately, his story had a strong influence over Peru's elections.

OAS Rejects anti-Venezuela Resolution

On Wednesday, Peru introduced a resolution before a meeting of the Organization of American states to condemn Venezuelan "meddling" in its elections. Although the resolution was backed vigorously by the United States, it was roundly rejected by other Latin American governments. [Click here for more info.](#)

Venezuela Events in Detroit and Milwaukee Next Week

Venezuela supporters in the Midwest have two opportunities to meet Venezuelan officials next week:

Reception with Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez

Wednesday, June 14

3:00pm - 5:00pm
International Institute

111 E. Kirby (at John R)
Detroit, MI

Admission is free, but attendees are encouraged to bring a potluck dish to share. Space is limited, so please RSVP to: Michigan Welfare Rights Organization Office, (313) 964-2500 or info@mwro.org

Panel Discussion on the Milwaukee-Carora Sister City Project
With Governor Luis Reyes from the State of Lara, and Mayor Julio Chávez of Carora.

Thursday June 15 2006
7:00pm - 8:30pm
University of Milwaukee
Union Building
Wisconsin Room
2200 East Kenwood Blvd
Milwaukee, WI

The city of Milwaukee is initiating the first sister city project between Venezuela and the United States in 10 years. Come learn about the city of Carora, at a discussion at the University of Milwaukee. Admission is free. For more information:
mkecircle@gmail.com

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Date: Thu, 29 Jun 2006 17:00:12 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela Weekly News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: Washington Post Questions 'Legitimacy' of Chavez: Your Help is Needed!

Washington Post Questions “Legitimacy” of Chavez

Your help is needed!

The Washington Post ran a misleading Editorial today arguing that President Chavez may not be a “legitimate democratic politician.” After countless elections and a recall referendum, the fact that this debate is still happening is ridiculous.

Your can help by responding with a letter to the editor. In this election year, it is crucial that misinformation about Venezuela’s electoral process not go unresponded. Letters can be sent to letters@washpost.com, and must be less than 150 words.

The editorial relies on four major flaws in presenting its argument:

- 1. An Innacurate Anecdote.** The Post uses the case of opposition mayor Henrique Capriles Radonski to make the point that the Venezuelan courts may be attacking political opponents. The accusation is not based on the facts (for more on the Capriles case and on Washington Post editorial coverage of Venezuela in general, please see our April 13 article)
- 2. An Overblown Analysis.** The Post overstates Capriles’ role in the upcoming elections, in order to make the case that his trial is politicized. He is simply not very influential in Venezuela. While Capriles may be popular within his sphere of influence, as mayor of Caracas’ smallest and wealthiest district, he has very little popularity among Chavez’s political base. If the Venezuelan government were seriously interested in attacking the opposition, they clearly would have focused one of the dozen candidates actually running against Chavez for president.
- 3. A Globehopping Victim.** The reason the Post editorial board knows about the Capriles case is because he was in Washington a few months ago on a publicity tour. The Post attempts to argue that the Venezuelan government is “despotic,” but if that were the case surely Capriles would have a hard time leaving the country for such campaigns.
- 4. An Oversimplified Case.** The case of Henrique Capriles Radonski is complicated, and a legitimate subject for the courts to decide. Capriles spoke before a near-riot crowd during the 2002 coup attempt against President Chavez. His supporters say he was trying to calm them down, but his conversations, captured on videotape, indicate that he may have tried to leverage the situation to illegally invade a foreign embassy. In the end, the Venezuelan courts may find Capriles innocent. But the fact is that the charges against him are serious, and involve one of the most complicated and ugly days in modern Venezuelan history.

The Washington Post does not have to support President Chavez, but they do have a responsibility to accurately report what is happening in the country. To abdicate that responsibility is to perform a disservice to their readers and to the people of Venezuela who support their president by wide margins.

Survey: Venezuela, U.S. Lead the World in National Pride

Venezuela and the United States are the two most patriotic countries in the world, but for very different reasons, according to a new report from the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago.

The study breaks down national pride into ten different indicators. Amazingly, Venezuela topped the world in four of the ten, including “fair and equal treatment of all groups in society,” as well as pride in the country’s history, arts & literature, and its accomplishments in sports.

Americans, on the other hand, lead the world in pride in political influence, military expertise, economy and democracy.

In only one category saw a country other than the U.S. or Venezuela at the top. France leads the world for pride in its social security program.

The study is remarkable, and tells a story of the way Venezuelans feel about their country that is not generally represented in the media. Please take a look at our full analysis, complete with charts and links to the original study.

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Date: Thu, 13 Jul 2006 15:49:51 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela Weekly News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: New Tools for Venezuela's Presidential Campaign

Venezuelan Presidential Campaign Gears Up

The president of Venezuela's election authorities is in Washington, DC this week to brief U.S. officials, journalists and others on the upcoming presidential elections scheduled for December 3rd.

At a public forum held this morning at the Inter-American Dialogue, Doctor Tibisay Lucena addressed a number of the issues facing one of the world's most scrutinized election agencies, including updating voter registries, ensuring access to the polls for all Venezuelans, developing a state of the art automated voting system, and mediating between two passionate political camps to ensure a free and fair election.

Dr. Lucena's job is made more difficult by Venezuela's private media, who frequently act as advocates for the opposition parties. In the month ahead, every rumor and unsubstantiated allegation by opposition parties will become headlines in the Venezuelan press. Many of these stories will be repeated in the U.S. and international press.

Our goal is to help you separate the myths from the facts in the months ahead. To that end we have added a new section to our website. "Venezuela's 2006 Presidential Elections" will be frequently updated for our readers to get up to speed on the way that the Venezuelan elections will be carried out.

Our first posting involves the results of the CNE's recent audit of the country's voter registry, which documents the thousands of potential irregularities investigated by the CNE, and the changes made by the agency.

New VIO Web Features

In addition to our elections updates, we are proud to announce new features to our website this week, including:

- * A search bar, to help you better find the fact sheets and articles you are looking for, and
- * Video. Watch Venezuelan shorts and full-length features directly from our website, including the hit movies *The Revolution Will Not be Televised* and *Venezuela Bolivariana!*

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Date: Fri, 21 Jul 2006 15:09:51 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela Weekly News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: YOUR HELP IS NEEDED: Opposition Rumors Reported as Fact

As we've repeatedly shown, U.S. press outlets often use a far different set of journalistic standards in their coverage of Venezuela than they do for domestic stories. In recent weeks, we've seen a remarkable increase in unsubstantiated rumors and uninvestigated allegations at the center of Venezuela-themed stories. Quite simply, this type of reporting would not be acceptable if applied to stories about the United States.

Here are just a few examples:

Election Rumors

In Wednesday's *Miami Herald*, reporters Phil Gunson and Steven Dudley report a bizarre set of opposition-fed rumors on the legitimacy of the upcoming presidential elections. The once-powerful opposition party COPEI, recently driven to obscurity after a series of scandals and embarrassingly undemocratic activities, is now claiming that the Chavez administration has stacked Venezuela's voter registry. The story explains that "COPEI hasn't provided any backup evidence or revealed how it obtained the information," and notes that no other opposition party will support their claims. Yet *Herald* reporters argue that the allegations on their own undermine the credibility of the vote. "Whether COPEI's complaint turns out to be more nursery rhyme than reality, the many allegations about the registry and the voting process have cast a shadow over [elections authorities]."

Apparently any unfounded rumor can undermine the credibility of the elections.

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED! Write a letter to the Editor of the *Miami Herald*. Click here for talking points.

Military Purchases

For several months now, U.S. officials have decried new military equipment purchases in Venezuela. State Department officials have publicly fretted over a supposed Venezuelan arms "buying spree" and questioned the motives of an "outsized military buildup." U.S. reporters have largely passed these allegations on without critique or analysis. But according to the U.S. government's own numbers, Venezuela continues to have *one of the smallest military budgets in South America*, dwarfed by Brazil, Colombia Chile, and Cuba in terms of sheer expenditures. When military budgets are represented as a percentage of GDP, even Bolivia and Ecuador spend more than Venezuela.

The VIO has put together an analysis of Venezuela's military expenditures and regional comparisons.

Anti-Semitism Rumors, Revisited

Back in January we reported that a conservative watchdog group misrepresented President Chavez's words to portray him as anti-Semitic. By removing key phrases from the middle of a sentence, The L.A. based Simon Wiesenthal center altered the context of a Chavez speech, and circulated a press release condemning the Venezuelan government.

The tactic backfired when Venezuelan Jewish leaders and mainstream U.S. organizations strongly rebuked the Wiesenthal Center for its actions. Unfortunately, some conservative news outlets continue to use the altered quotes in their discussions of Chavez.

This week once again, Chavez was targeted for his alleged remarks against Israel. But as AlterNet points out, an appropriate translation makes a world of difference. While headlines screamed that Chavez blamed “U.S. Support for Israel” for increased tensions in the Middle East, the President actually criticized U.S. tolerance of “abuses of the Israeli elites”—a crucial difference. In the speech, made soon after the bombing of Lebanon began, Chavez went out of his way to make clear that in his opinion, “the people of Israel” were not to blame, but that phrase never made it into press accounts of his remarks.

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Date: Fri, 28 Jul 2006 16:45:41 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela Weekly News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: Anti-Venezuela Resolution Passes House, New Poll Results

Anti-Venezuela Resolution Passes House

In a late-night vote last Wednesday evening, the House of Representatives passed a resolution condemning Venezuela for not doing enough to prevent drug smuggling. This was a purely political move. As we noted in our recent analysis, the resolution alternately ignores important measures that Venezuela has taken to combat narco-trafficking and even misrepresents clearly documented facts.

It is important to keep in mind that this resolution is not law; it is merely an expression of opinion by the House. More, the debate on the House floor was illuminating. A number of Members of Congress easily debunked the misinformation presented by the anti-Venezuela factions. Although the resolution passed, its lead supporters have significantly diminished their credibility on Venezuela-related issues. Read the full debate transcript.

Venezuela Elections: Poll Results

The VIO has added a new feature to our website to help you keep up with the latest polling for Venezuela's upcoming presidential elections.

In each of these polls, including those aligned with opposition parties, President Chavez enjoys more than 50% support of the Venezuelan public and no single opposition candidate breaks 10%. These results parallel the polling that came out in the months before the 2004 recall referendum, which Chavez won with nearly 60% of the vote.

We will continue to keep our polling page updated as new data emerges, so please check back often.

Trade Bloc Endorses Venezuela For Security Council Seat

The South American trade bloc Mercosur defied enormous U.S. pressure this week to endorse Venezuela's bid for a temporary seat on the U.N. Security council. The U.S. has vigorously lobbied for its preferred candidate, Guatemala, and reportedly threatened countries with limited sanctions for voting for Venezuela.

Demonstrating its deep lack of understanding of Latin American politics, a *Washington Post* column today argues that the Venezuela endorsement is a sign that Mercosur has "gone bananas," claiming that it stems from a regional "inferiority complex" and a "mania" to oppose all things endorsed by the United States.

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Date: Fri, 4 Aug 2006 13:43:50 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela Weekly News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: As Election Season Opens, Opposition Launches Press Campaign

Venezuela Kicks Off Presidential Campaign

This week marks the official launch of Venezuela's presidential campaign. As in years past, some opposition leaders are focusing their energy on discrediting the electoral process rather than running an effective campaign. The latest polls indicate that they have their work cut out for them. Even opposition polls indicate that President Chavez is favored by well over 50% of likely voters in Venezuela. What's more, no single opposition candidate has yet to break out of the single digits in nationwide polls.

A number of opposition leaders have begun a media campaign to discredit the elections process, hoping that they can undermine a Chavez victory by casting doubt on the fairness of the vote. Although they have no evidence to present, the international media has been all too willing to reprint their allegations with very little fact checking. This week's issue of The Economist, for example, includes a story titled "The difficulty of standing up to Hugo Chavez in an election that may well not be free or fair."

Although The Economist acknowledges that two years ago, "[t]he opposition claimed, without proof, that Mr. Chavez's victory in the recall referendum was fraudulent," the magazine happily presents their current list of unsubstantiated allegations without criticism.

HOW YOU CAN HELP: Your help is needed responding to The Economist today. By reporting discredited opposition rumors as fact, the magazine unfairly casts a pall on the Venezuelan vote. Short letters to the Economist may be sent to letters@economist.com, and must include your name, address and a daytime telephone number for confirmation.

[Click here](#) for information on what the Economist got wrong, and the text of the original article.

Learn More About Venezuelan Elections

For the next month, the Venezuela Information Office will be regularly updating our website to provide you with everything you need to become an expert on the presidential elections, slated for December 3rd.

This week, we have included a new fact sheet on Venezuela's electronic voting system, one of the most sophisticated and accurate in the world.

Please visit our website for a listing of all our elections materials.

NOTE: The Venezuela Information Office is dedicated to informing the American public about contemporary Venezuela, and receives its funding from the government of Venezuela. More information is available from the FARA office of the Department of Justice in Washington DC.

Date: Thu, 10 Aug 2006 16:08:24 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: Opposition Parties Sidestep Primaries, Announce Candidate

Venezuela's opposition parties announced yesterday that they would scrap the political primaries scheduled for next week, and rally behind the candidacy of Governor Manuel Rosales to challenge President Hugo Chavez in the December elections. The decision came after many days of closed-door negotiations between major opposition parties.

So Who Is Rosales?

Chavez will be running against a longtime politician from the Venezuela's oil rich state of Zulia. Governor Manuel Rosales is quite popular in his home state, but till now has been only a regional figure in Venezuelan politics. Rosales' candidacy was made possible after elections authorities ruled, over the protest of Chavez supporters, that he would not need to resign his post as governor in order to run for president.

Of the three top anti-Chavez campaigns, Rosales had taken a slight lead in the polls. In June, a Datanalysis poll indicated that he had support of 9% of the Venezuelan electorate, although he will likely pick up some support from Venezuelans who had backed Julio Borges (8%) and Teodoro Petkoff (2%). Chavez's support levels are currently at 55%, according to Datanalysis.

Rosales does carry some baggage, however. During the 2002 coup against President Chavez, he was filmed hugging dictator-for-a-day Pedro Carmona before signing the infamous decree that dissolved Venezuela's constitution, along with its legislative and judicial branches. Those images are already running on Venezuelan television. You can view them on YouTube (check the 1:30 minute mark).

Read the Los Angeles Times' take on the Rosales candidacy.

Primary Selection

The decision to sidestep the primaries has been controversial in opposition circles for a number of reasons. Some rank and file opposition voters have complained that they had no say in the process, while others worried that closed negotiations evoked images of Venezuela's corrupt Fourth Republic, which famously made national decisions behind closed doors. Another question is what will happen to the millions of dollars that the opposition NGO Sumate raised from the public sector and international grants in order to fund the primaries.

Saturday President Chavez is expected to file his candidacy papers, marking the official opening of the Presidential season.

Faith Delegation Writes of Experiences

And finally today, a religious delegation just back from Venezuela published their experiences in the Providence Journal last week.

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Envelope-to: olivia@veninfo.org
Date: Tue, 15 Aug 2006 10:42:31 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela Information Office <vio@veninfo.org>
Reply-To: vio@veninfo.org
To: olivia@veninfo.org
Subject: Newsday Mischaracterizes Venezuela as a Threat. Your help is needed!

Newsday Mischaracterizes Venezuela

On Monday Newsday characterized Venezuela's bid for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council as a threat to the U.S. Criticizing Venezuela's diplomatic relations with Iran and other nations as an attempt to garner support for itself and claiming that Venezuela would go so far as to cut off oil to the U.S., the editorial misses the point: Venezuela does not need to win support, it already has it. In a time of US unilateralism at its strongest, developing nations around the world are glad to support Venezuela as an alternative to failed US-led initiatives. Moreover, unlike Guatemala who has been criticized for its violent repression of social justice groups and instability at home, Venezuela has worked effectively with its neighbors to combat narco-trafficking and terrorism, building peace and stability in South America.

What You Can Do. Set the Record Straight!

Read the editorial Troublemaker: Hugo Chavez Would Be Problem at UN and write a letter to the editor

In your letter you may want to highlight one or two of the facts below.

- Venezuela is not an economic threat. It is the U.S.' 2nd largest trading partner and has no intention of cutting off oil to the U.S. The U.S. is Venezuela's biggest market for oil and oil made products.
- Just this week Venezuela publicly opposed an OPEC-led oil embargo against nations that support Israel in its war on Lebanon.
- Venezuela is not a military threat to the U.S. either, in fact it is one of the lowest defense spenders in the region.

If you send a letter or would like more information let us know at vio@veninfo.org

Envelope-to: olivia@veninfo.org

Date: Tue, 15 Aug 2006 09:47:12 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela Information Office <vio@veninfo.org>
Reply-To: vio@veninfo.org
To: olivia@veninfo.org
Subject: Boston Globe Mischaracterizes Venezuela-Your help is needed!

The Boston Globe Mischaracterizes Venezuela

Over the weekend the Boston Globe reported on the criticism faced by Venezuela's state run oil company PDVSA for using a share of its oil wealth to subsidize social programs for the poor. While the article quotes the voices of social program recipients as well as opposition members who represent the interests of the former oil elite, it largely reads as an overall condemnation of state run industries and social programs. The article also leads the reader to believe that Venezuela's current social programs are only providing "short term" solutions rather than fostering long term growth. Considering that Venezuela had the largest GDP growth rate in all of Latin America last year and poverty has been reduced significantly since Chavez became president in 1999, it can be categorically stated that this is false.

What You Can Do

Set the record straight! Read the article Critics Slam Venezuelan Oil Windfall Spending and write a letter to the editor

Some facts that the article leaves out are below. You may want to mention a few of them in your letter.

- With its social missions Venezuela is targeting the very things needed to lift the nation out of poverty including literacy, college education, and health care, all subsidized with its oil profits.
- On top of its programs for the poor, which have directly benefited more than half of the population, PDVSA has reinvested much of its profits back into the oil sector by committing 48% of its budget to exploration and production (E&P).
- PDVSA has put aside nearly \$60 billion over the next 6 years for investment (which includes activities such as refining and exploration).
- Venezuela is much more open to foreign exploration and technology investment than other countries with nationalized oil companies such as Mexico and Saudi Arabia.
- Venezuela's poverty rates have fallen from 42.8% in the beginning of 1999 to 37.9% in the second half of 2005.

If you send a letter please let us know at vio@veninfo.org

Date: Wed, 23 Aug 2006 16:33:49 -0400 (EDT)
From: Venezuela News & Action <newsandaction@veninfo.org>
To: eric@veninfo.org
Subject: U.S. Sets Up Spy Operations 'Manager' for Venezuela

U.S. Launches Anti-Venezuela Spy Desk

The United States has announced that it will consolidate its intelligence activities within Venezuela in the lead up to the December 3 elections. Last Friday, U.S. National Intelligence Director John Negroponte, himself a key figure in the Central American civil wars during the 1980s, announced that the State Department would establish a "mission manager" to collect intelligence on Venezuela and Cuba. Currently only Iran and North Korea have specific spy chiefs.

According to a statement from Negroponte's office, the mission manager "will be responsible for integrating collection and analysis on Cuba and Venezuela across the Intelligence Community, identifying and filling gaps in intelligence, and ensuring the implementation of strategies, among other duties." The intelligence directorate claims that the office is "critical today, as policymakers have increasingly focused on the challenges that Cuba and Venezuela pose to American foreign policy."

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED! Speak Out for Venezuela's Democracy

Venezuela is not a threat to the United States, and by increasing covert activity just months before Venezuela's presidential elections, the U.S. government may be dangerously interfering with Venezuela's democracy.

Please, take five minutes today to voice your opinion. Visit our Action Center, where you can make your voice heard on this crucial matter.

Venezuela Elections Update:

Polls: Three weeks ago, Venezuelan opposition parties selected Manuel Rosales as their candidate to run against Chavez, although comedian Benjamin Rausseo remains in the race as a dark horse candidate. This weekend the first polling results since Rosales' selection was released: Chavez is leading the pack with 57% support. Check out all the latest polling results on our website.

Please visit our 2006 Elections section on our website for all the background you need to get up to speed on the process. We have updated the page this week to include new information on the Venezuelan opposition, as well as statements from International Observers.

NOTE: The Venezuela Information Office is dedicated to informing the American public about contemporary Venezuela, and receives its funding from the government of Venezuela. More information is available from the FARA office of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC

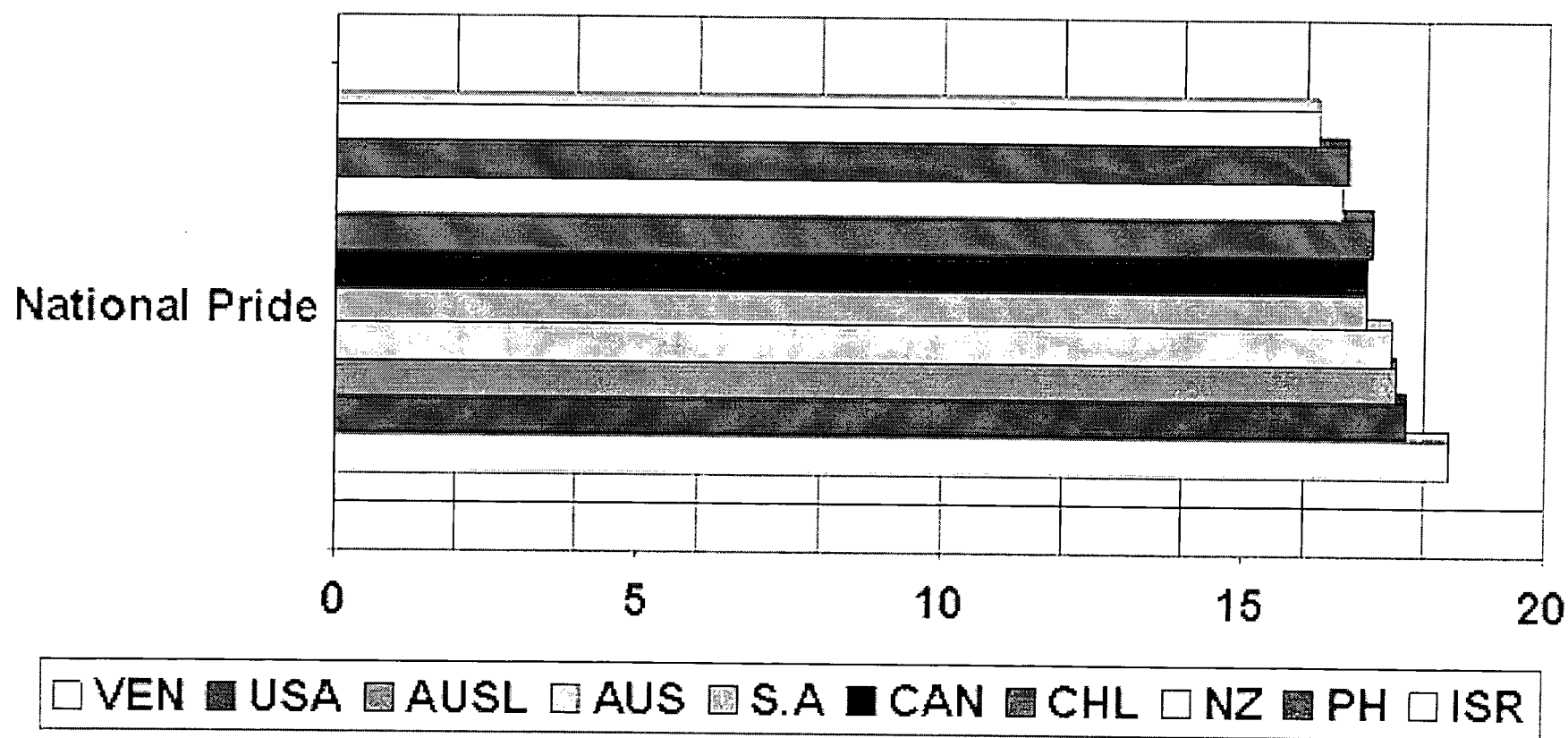


**National Pride in Cross National and Temporal Perspective
University of Chicago Pride Survey**

10 Graphs made by Edward Mercado

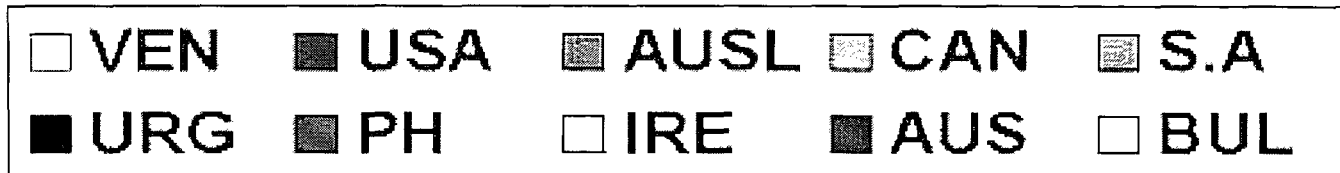
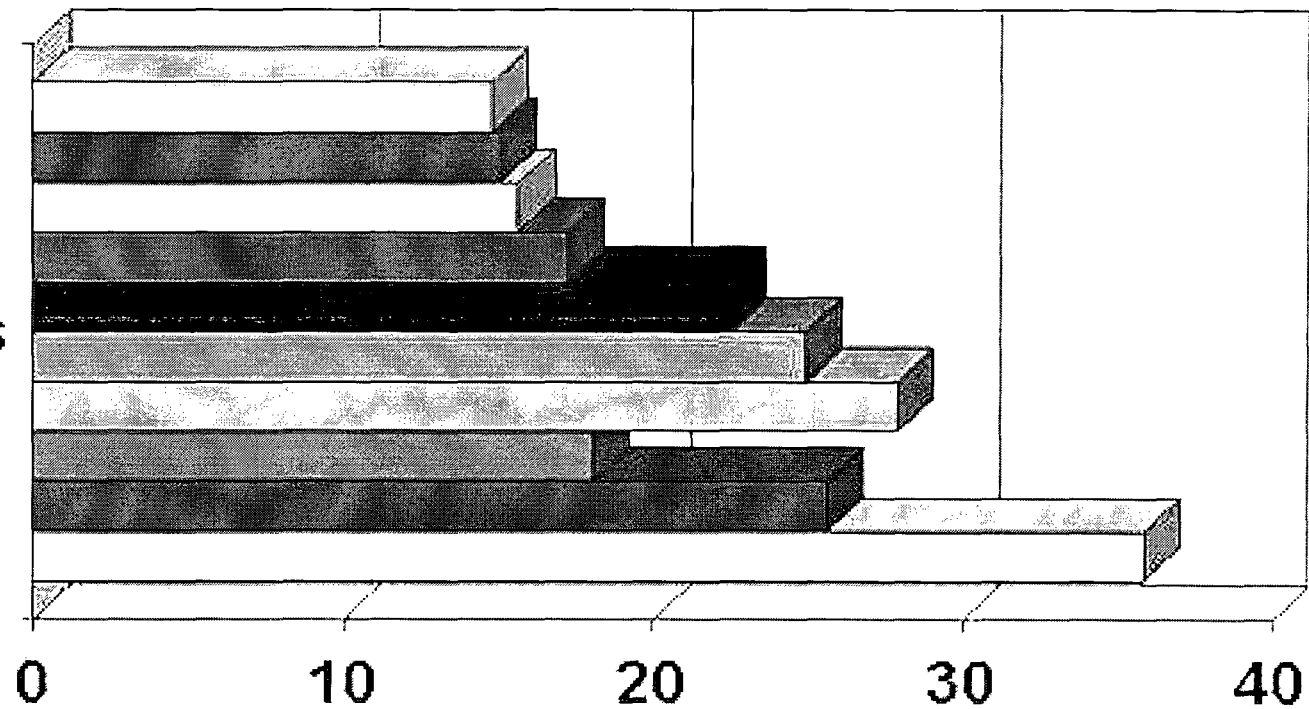
NORC/ OVERALL RANK OF COUNTRIES ON DOMAIN-SPECIFIC NATIONAL PRIDE

Overall National Pride

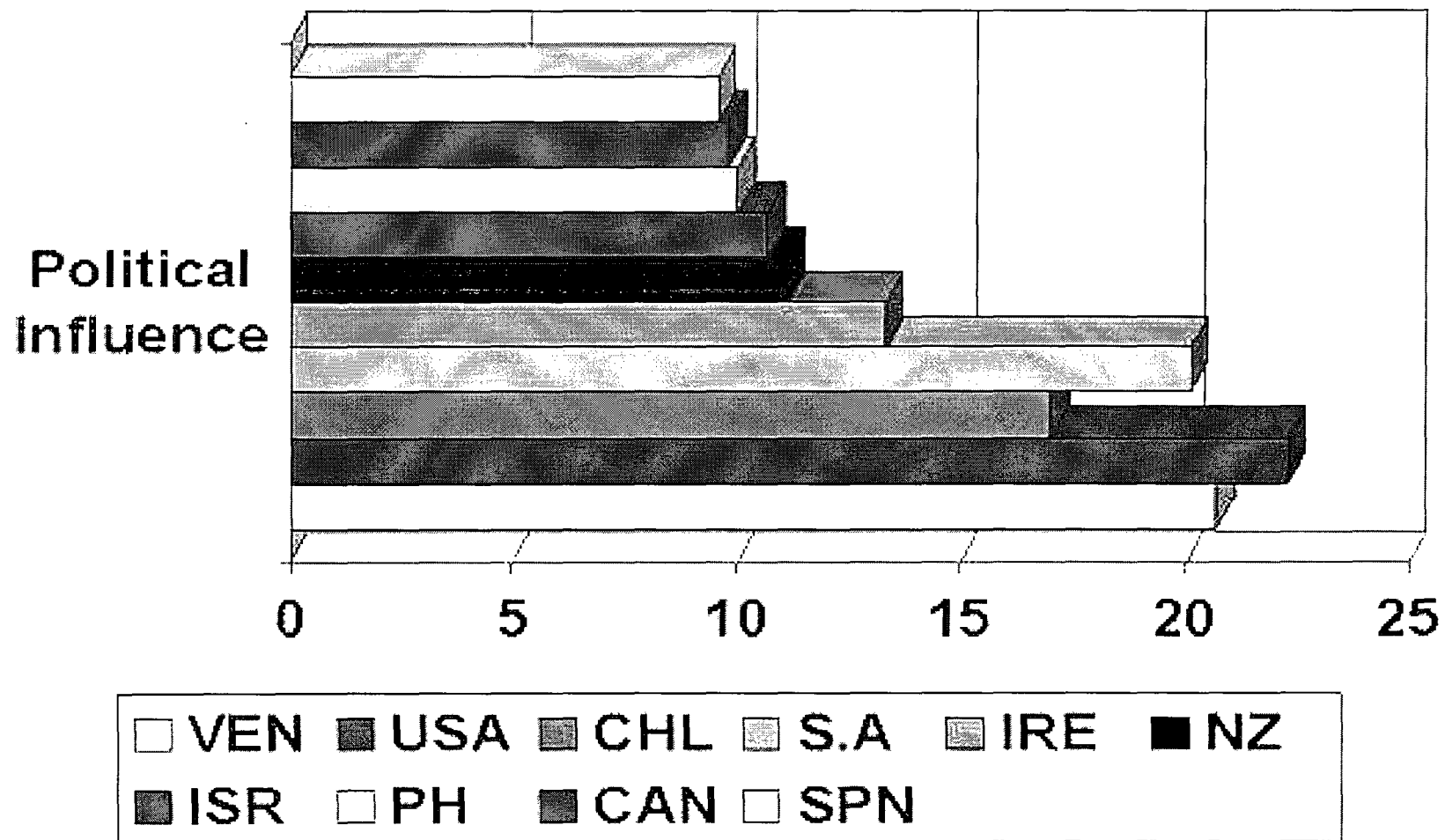


NORC/ RANKING ON NATIONAL PRIDE MINORITY GROUPS DOMAIN

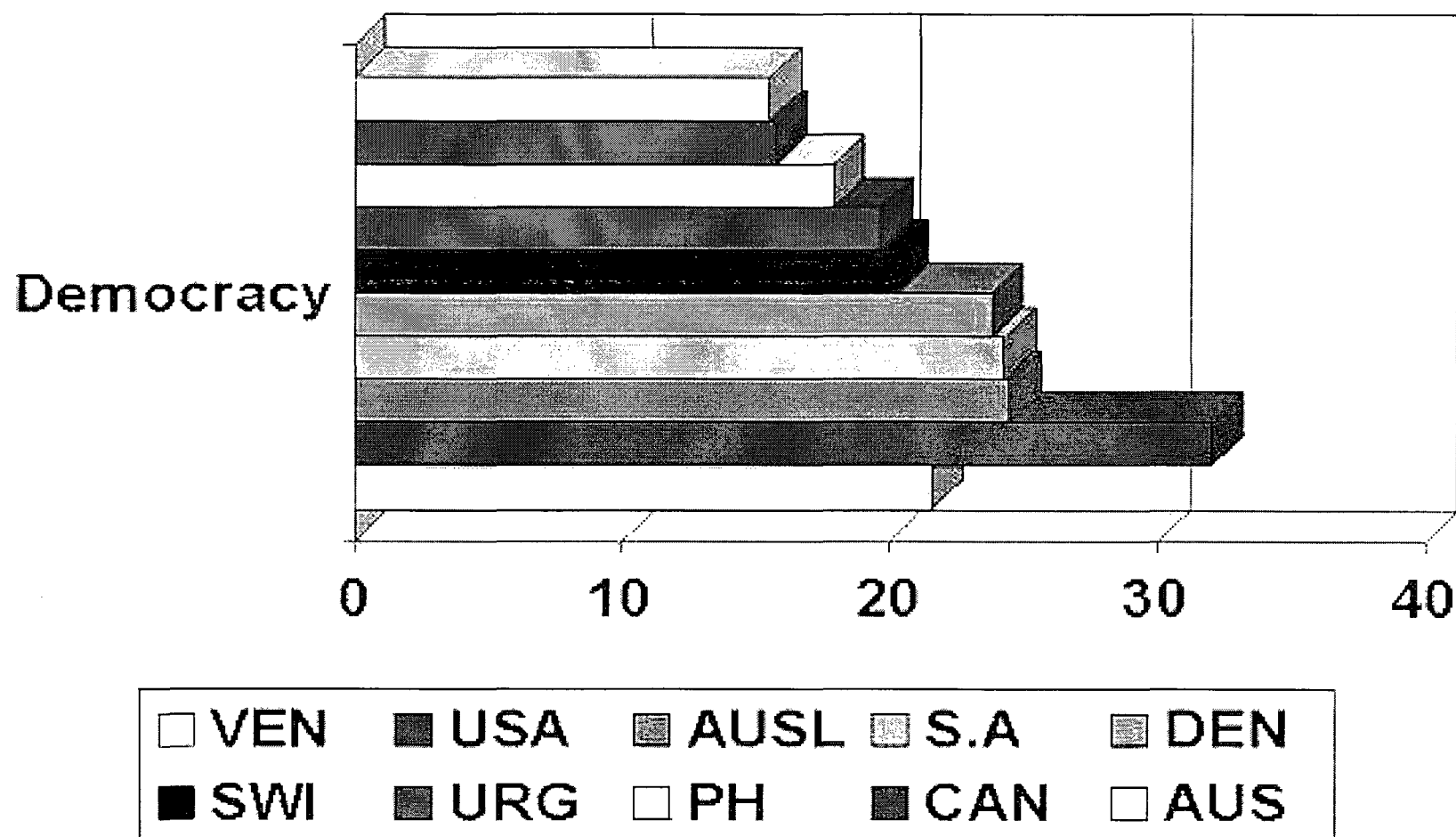
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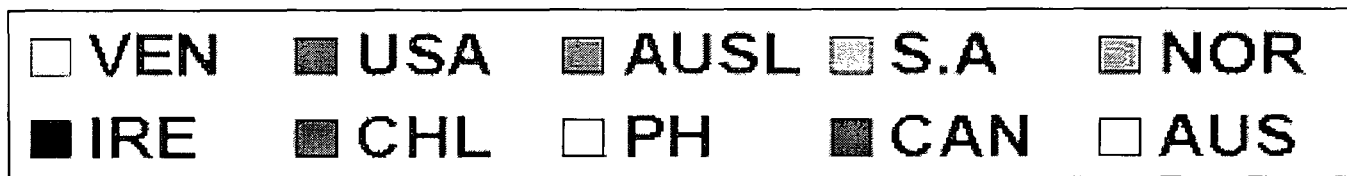
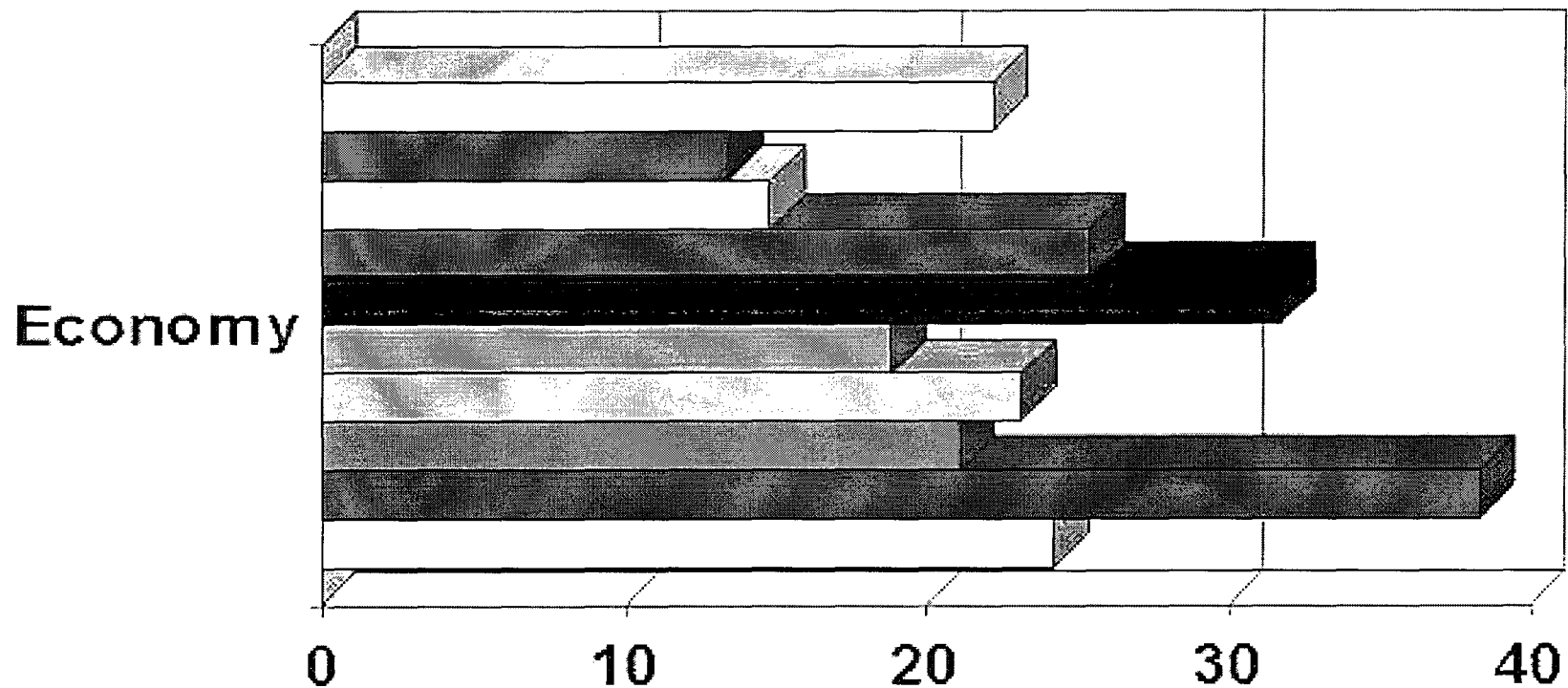
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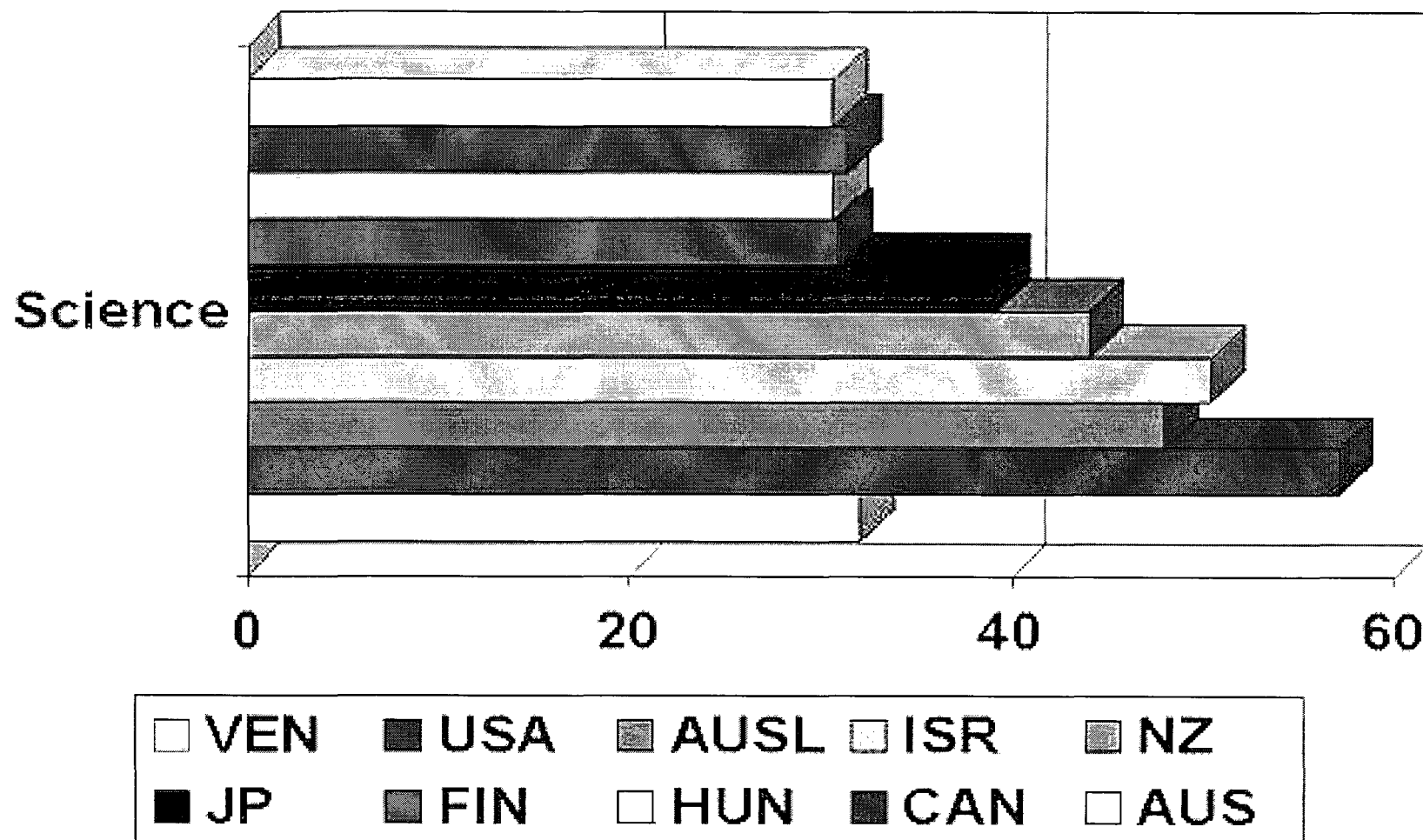
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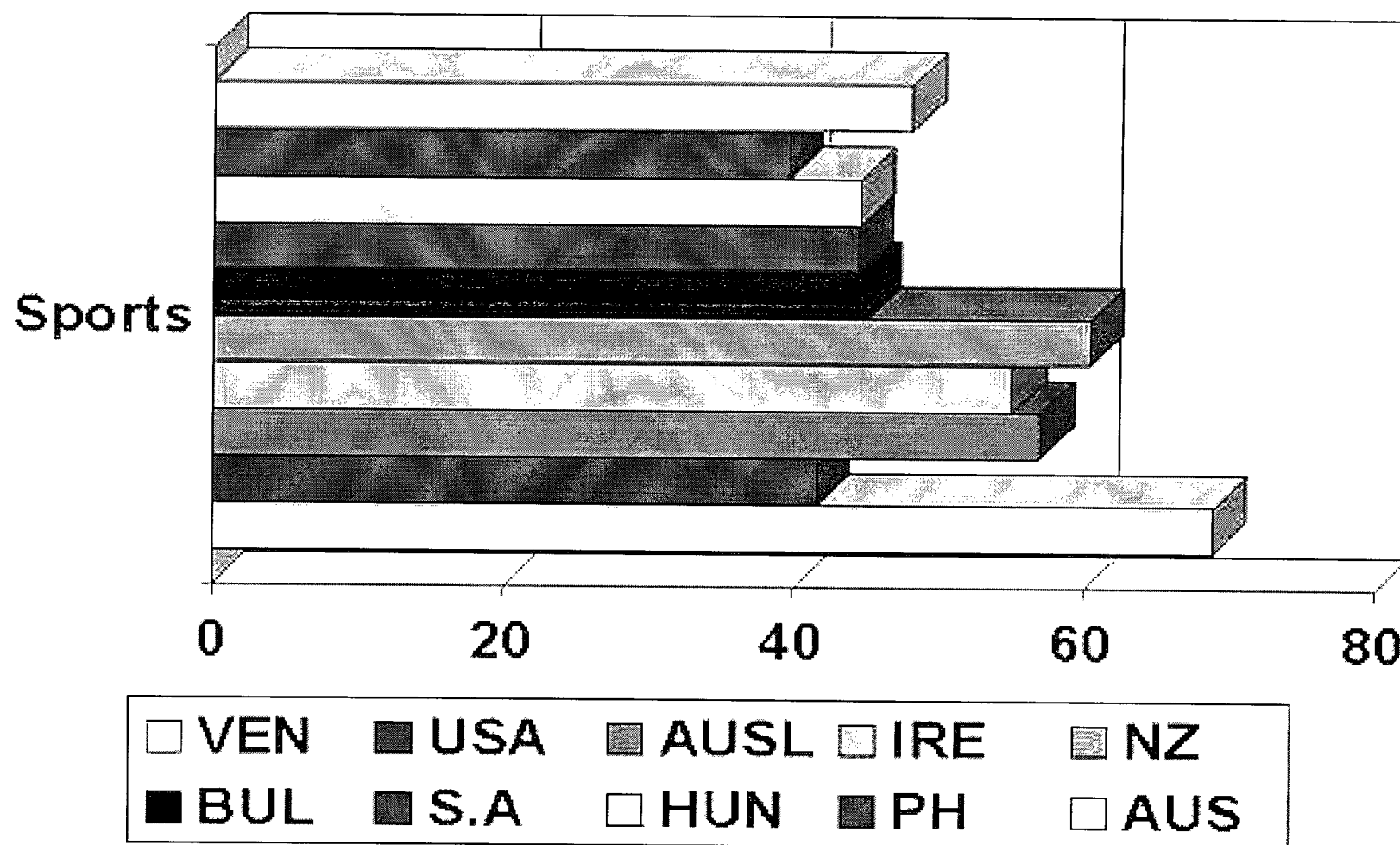
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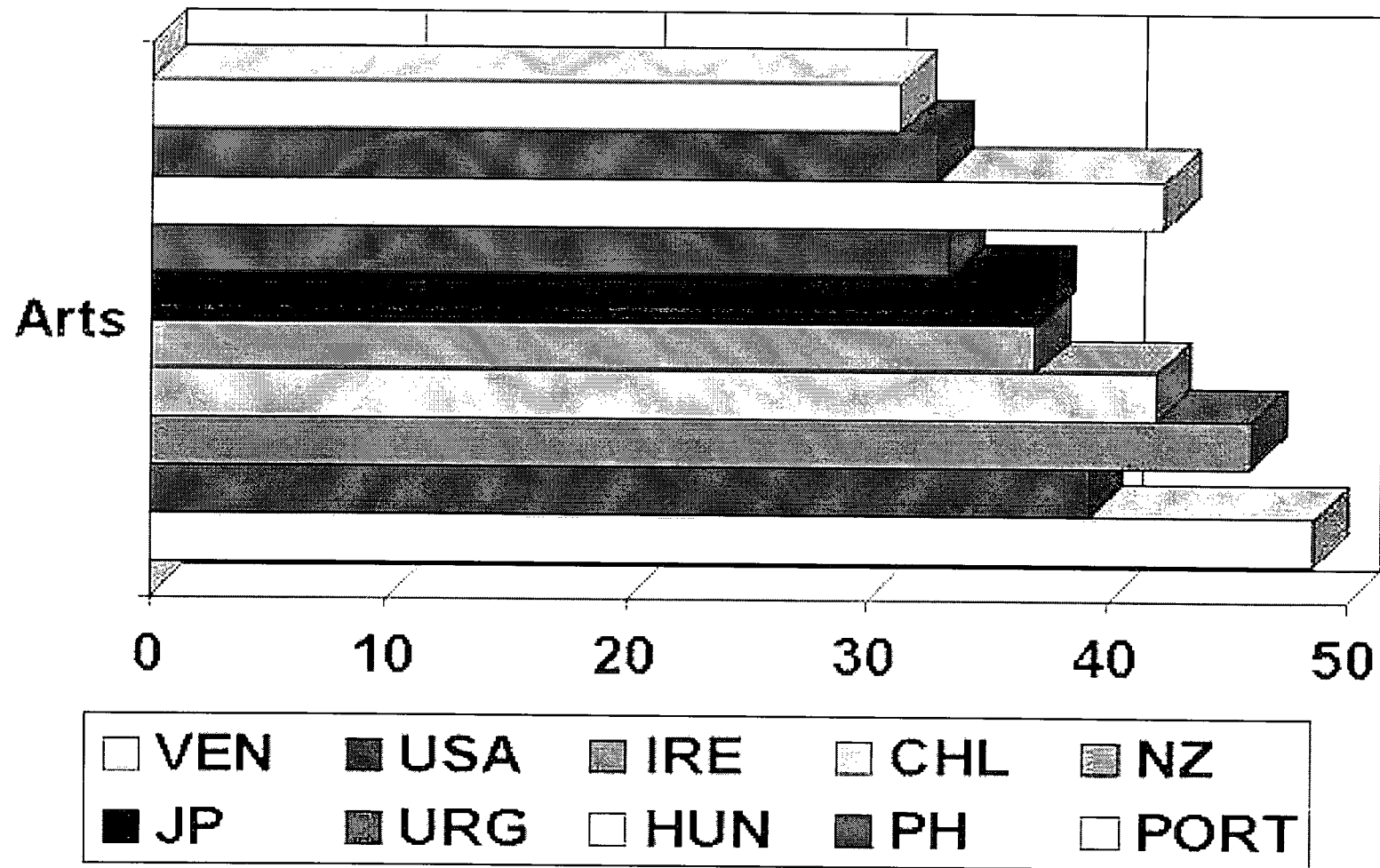
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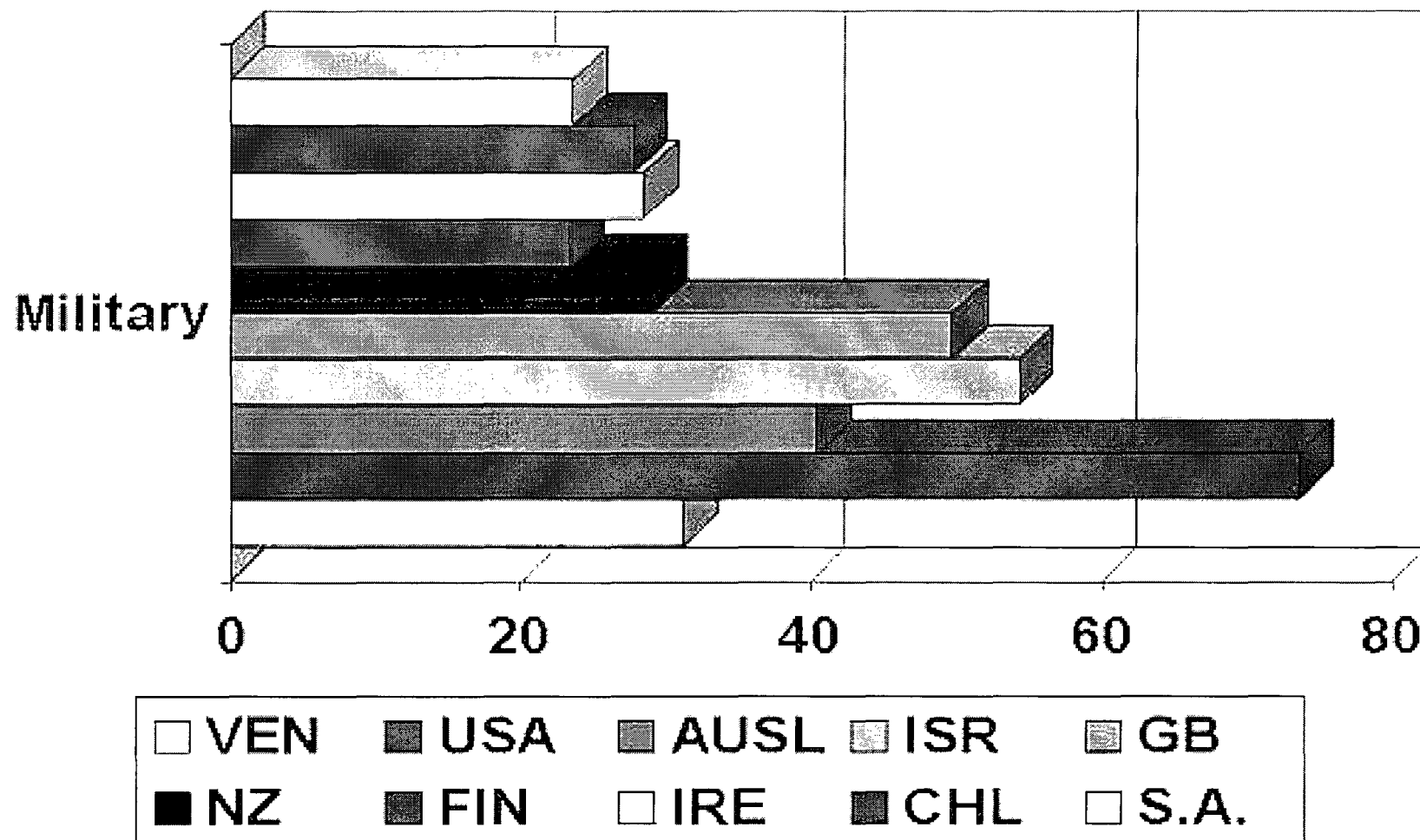
NORC/ RANKING ON NATIONAL PRIDE SPORTS DOMAIN



NORC/ RANKING ON NATIONAL PRIDE ARTS DOMAIN



NORC/ RANKING ON NATIONAL PRIDE MILITARY DOMAIN



NORC/ RANKING ON NATIONAL PRIDE History Domain

